The Cross Examiner

kidbrothers.net/interviews/cross-examiner-oct0186.html

Rich Mullins is one of the rising performers in the glamorous world of contemporary Christian music. And yet, as a former CBC student, he is one of our own. The story of Rich Mullins is one of success and failure. He hailed originally from a farm just north of Richmond, Indiana, and his rise has been one of both emotional highs and lows. Before entering the music world for a career, Mullins spent six years at CBC and yet never graduated ("I had trouble picking out a major!"). During this time, he served as interim youth minister for First Christian Church in Kingsport, Tennessee, and Kentwood Christian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Yet it was his youth ministry at Erlanger United Methodist Church in Erlanger, Kentucky, that Mullins came to the crossroads of music or ministry. However, even at the "crossroads" the choice was clear: youth ministry was his priority. "It wasn't a big deal to me," he explained. "I wasn't thinking of that [music] as a career. I was intending to be a youth minister."

However, God had something else in mind for Rich Mullins. Following an ICTHUS festival in Wilmore, Kentucky, Mullins began to realize the power of music in the lives of young people. And following God's leading, Mullins moved to Nashville, Tennessee to pursue a totally new direction as a songwriter and performer.

One day the break came when one of his songs was to be recorded by Amy Grant, who was quickly ascending to the top of the music world with her songs. That song, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord", would later help to secure Mullins a place on Grant's "Unguarded" tour as the opening act.

Yet Mullins was also cementing himself in the hearts of music lovers when he released his debut album, simply entitled, "Rich Mullins". The album, recorded on a low budget, was completed within a two month stretch. He is presently working on a new album (still untitled) which he hopes to see on the market by February.

Mullins, who lists Bruce Cockburn, Peter Gabriel, and U2 as his favorite influences, is beginning to see a lot of success come his way. And for someone who tried out for, and failed to make, CBC's Talent Night four or five times, that's not bad.

Those early years of "Talent Night" failure have now given way to Amy Grant tours and record albums. And Mullins lists several "memorable" concerts, including The Forum in Los Angeles ("really scary"), and The Omni in Atlanta, where he played the same stage as U2 ("I forgot to play the piano in one part because I had a lot of friends there and was nervous!").

Above all, however, Rich Mullins is a committed Christian. And on the eve of his benefit concert for Mark and Beth Lutz at CBC, Rich spent some time with a Cross Examiner reporter for a close-up, intimate look at the real Rich Mullins. The following are Rich's repsonses to a variety of subjects:

On the Turning Point from Youth Minister to Musician

"I was just watching the kids (at the Ichtus festival in Wilmore, KY) and how affected they were by the music. I really felt like I had some gifts in music and at the time I just prayed 'Lord, I want to do this but I want to take the steps'. The next morning my neighbor was sick and didn't go to work and I was just playing the piano when there was a knock at the door. He wanted to know if it was me who was playing the piano and I said yes. He said, 'Well, I don't know what you do for a living but you should be in music'. So I though that was either a really weird coincidence or an answer from God. Within a week I had several people calling me."

On His Song "Sing Your Praise to the Lord", Recorded by Amy Grant:

"It was the first song I ever had published. Beth Lutz took a tape to a convention and gave it to someone who gave it to someone who gave it to someone and it ended up at Amy's manager's office."

On Making the Move to Nashville to Begin His Music Career:

"I made a list of all the positives and all the negatives. I did as much thinking as I could. And then I prayed, 'There are three things I really have to give up to do this and I need to know they would be replaced. When these three things line up, I will consider it a good move.' So I got down there [to Nashville] and like 'snap-snap-snap' people were saying we want you to be a part of this, and we want you to be a part of **this**, and we feel like this is an important thing for you as a writer. Within a couple of hours, all three of the reasons were covered. Once again, a very odd coincidence because I had prayed very specifically and God gave me an indication of where He wanted me to go."

On the Contemporary Christian Music Industry:

" I think the biggest probelem is not necessarily the Christian music. The problem is that we in America trust institutions so much that we have all these other organizations doing the work of the church. And because they do this, the local body is robbed of the joy of

actually involving themselves personally. I think that a lot of people want the Christian music industry to be an evangelistic or nurturing thing. People are looking at the Christian music industry and saying, 'Feed us! Convert us! Make us what we want to be!' And that is not the job of any industry. That's the job of the church. We need to realize that it is wonderful to have songs to listen to while we are doing the housework or driving the car that are going to be positive and uplifting. I don't really listen to Christian music."

On the Question of Rock Music in the Church:

"One real problem that we have fallen into is that we cater to our own tastes and we forget that there are other things to experience. It's like people who eat spaghetti constantly and never have an oyster or a lobster. I think it does us good to go to a church where they sing a [certain] kind of music, but I do fall into judgment myself when I say, 'Gee, if we can't have rock then I am not going to go'. If you want to go to a Christian rock concert on Thursday night to hear rock music, then you are free to go, but we don't go to church to hear rock music."

On CBC's "Talent Night", Which He Failed to Make Several Times:

"I was allowed to play a piano duet once. And I accompanied several people. I just could never cut the mustard. I was very hurt and angry. I was going, 'You know, I could take this if the people who were in this were really excellent.' But they weren't. I don't like the idea of a talent night anyway. I was too competitive to deal with it very well."

On the Criticism of Amy Grant:

"Don't buy her albums if you don't like her. So what if she does things you don't necessarily approve of. I am sure that God, or I, or she, or any number of people don;t approve of everything that you do. It's really nobody's business. That's between her and God and between you and God."

On Touring with Amy Grant:

"Amy Grant is one of those people who the more I know the more I respect her. I can't think of a single minister I have met that exhibits the kind of servanthood that she does, the kind of calmness. She's very pleasant, loving, and caring"

On His Responsibilities to Audiences:

"It is not the job of a musician to convert people. I can introduce them to Christ. But the reason I am a Christian is not because someone got up and sang a song. The reason I am a Christian is because someone loved me. We do affect people and I am glad that I affect people in a good way. But nobody can take responsibility for anybody but themselves. I feel I do have a responsibility to God and I have a responsibility to the church. My responsibility, as a musician, is to play honestly, communicate clearly, and to be faithful. If I an faithful and obedient to God than that will affect those people I come in contact with."

On Being a Role Model to Young People:

"That's when I have a ministry. I don't really believe in 'stars'. But I think role models are good. If I should be honored enough to be looked up to, one thing I wouls want kids to see is that they are important and that if they are going to imitate me, then that's what I would want them to imitate - making other people feel important."

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Dave Mullins Interview Part II

kidbrothers.net/interviews/dave/bro2.html

Dave took time out to sit down with Robin at the keyboard and give this online, late-night interview to catch us up on The Legacy, his new career away from the pulpit and to kindly answer questions from the ragamuffin list...

Screen names have been changed to protect privacy.
Also, keep in mind that Rich's family called him by his middle name and Dave refers to him at times in this interview as Wayne.

Rhonda: Last time I saw you, you were on your way to KS - now you're there and settled - tell us how you like it.

Dave: I'd say we like it just fine. We're getting settled and it feels like home.

Rhonda: And last time we talked, your role in the Legacy was undefined...what about now? Do you have a better idea of what you'll be doing?

Dave: Umm, wow, right now Alyssa Loukota and I are pretty much doing everything together.

Rhonda: Which consists of...?

Dave: We did Jesus Fest, which went well. We have taken two trips to the Rez (reservation) and we were able to teach in a couple of camps down there.

Rhonda: What was that like for you?

Dave: It was a good trip. It was interesting. I found it to be similar to Appalachia. The poverty is pretty overwhelming. But the people seemed like people anywhere else. We participated in a couple of camps, mainly just being there and observing. We've laid some goals for the next year.

Rhonda: Pretend I'm clueless (not a great stretch) and I ask you what you do for a living....

Dave: My days vary greatly. Most days, Alyssa and I get together either at her house, my

house, or the office and work on planning and direction for the Legacy. We also try to answer the phone calls that come in, which is my job.

The mail, and email. Right now we're getting caught up on that. We have developed a brochure for our native work and we're also in search of school buses, instruments and other things needed to support our traveling schools.

Rhonda: Are you getting quite a bit of mail?

Dave: Yeah, it's coming pretty steadily, along with some donations. And we have sent out an update letter. Other days I just spend studying.

Rhonda: Studying what?

Dave: Well, we have some plans for the spring to address the requests to learn more about St. Francis so I've been reading quite a bit about him. We'll be sending out a newsletter this month to talk about that. Also I've been reading a lot of Phillip Yancy. I'm also working on sermons for a Faith Promise Rally at my home church.

Rhonda: And tell me about the retreat ministry that you've put in place.

Dave: We have, through a lot of thinking and praying, decided that our ministry is to more than just the Native Americans. We want to try to help people who really are looking for a deeper relationship with Christ to find ways to do that. We have had a lot of questions about what we are. Are we an order or something else? We hope to have a retreat on Abandonment to Christ ready to offer by the first of Feb. 1999. We will be teaching using the example of St. Frank. He tried to live a life totally dependent upon Christ. He really believed and took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We will be teaching sessions on those three ideas. We don't hold [St. Francis] up as some kind of God but as a person who really lived a life of dependence and sacrifice to God.

Rhonda: How long will it last and how often will you give them?

Dave: The retreat will be for a weekend. We now have the basic overview ready. It will begin on Friday night and run through Sat. night. Right now we plan to have Fri. be an introduction. We will also have a time of worship. Sat. will have three main sessions with teaching times on poverty or simplicity, chastity and obedience. Along with some other activities.

Rhonda: Who will this involve?

Dave: Right now it will be Alyssa and I and possibly Mitch, Eric, and Michael. Jim Smith

may also help on some retreats. Right now we will be traveling with this retreat. If there is a group who really wants us to come we will try to come.

Rhonda: So a church can bring you in?

Dave: Yes. And we will probably offer a concert. That is the plan and I'm really excited about this.

Rhonda: So if people want that for their church they just contact KIDBROTHERS?

Dave: Yes. We hope to send out our first news letter to our mailing list later this month. We hope to have some details about the retreats in there. We are now studying and planning for it. We hope to be ready to do it in Feb. Eventually we would like to set up retreat centers around the country. We would like to set one up in Cin. Ohio, here in Wichita, and one in the south west. If we get that done it would be open to people year around. We would offer directed retreats in the spring and fall. And possibly week long things in the summer. It would also be available to groups who just wanted to use the facilities. It would also be available to those who just need to get away by themselves for some quiet time with God.

Rhonda: So you'll have both - traveling retreats and retreat centers?

Dave: Yeah, for awhile. If we get the retreat centers going we might phase out the traveling. We are going to keep our travel down to about two weekends a month. That will have to include retreats and visits to the rez.

Rhonda: What's the hardest part of your new position?

Dave: Wow, getting my wife to do something. LOL.

Rhonda: LOL -

Dave: (I typed that under duress.)

Rhonda: I bet!

Dave: Umm, no, the hardest part of my job would be just not really knowing where to start, and what direction to go, and right now dealing with all the stuff about Rich. The Legacy is pretty simple compared to the estate stuff.

Rhonda: Tell me what you mean by "dealing with the estate."

Dave: Just dealing with the offers of books, videos, and the like. And deciding what is appropriate. I mean, there is some who think that people want it and we should make it available and making money off of that is okay. Others think that we should do nothing. Just because people want it, doesn't mean that it's the right thing to do and probably somewhere in the middle of all of that is what's best.

Rhonda: Were you ever involved in Rich's ministry before?

Dave: I would say no. I mean, he had his ministry and I had mine. I had a lot of respect for him and what he did. God blessed him with that. And He called me in another direction and blessed me in that.

Rhonda: Would you say you leaned on Rich spiritually or was it the other way around?

Dave: That's a tough one. Ummm, I had a great deal of respect for him. I learned a lot through him. He challenged me and I think from what others have told me, that he had a great deal of respect for me and that I challenged him. So I would say he influenced me and I influenced him. I don't know that either of us leaned on the other.

Rhonda: I went to one of Rich's concerts with our mutual friend who went to college with you - when she saw Rich she said " I went to school with your brother!"

His face lit up - he said, "Oh yeah? Isn't he great?" He was proud of you...

Dave: I hope so.

Rhonda: How can you make the foundation shift it's focus from Rich to its own identity?

Dave: I don't know. I think with time it will naturally. We don't want to divorce ourselves from him. The work that we're doing comes from a seed that was planted through him. But I hope that people will come to see this work not as Rich's, not as David's, or anybody else's. I hope that people will come to see this work as God's.

If I'm not here to do it, I believe God will have someone else do it if He wants it done.

Rhonda: What sort of things are you doing to spread the word about the foundation?

Dave: Right now, it is mainly word of mouth. I think that in the Jesus Record there is a little note about us. I'm not even sure if there is any other thing like that advertising for us. We have our web page.

Rhonda: And a mailing list?

Dave: Yeah, yeah, we've got about - I think 250 or so people on our mailing list now.

Rhonda: Is it snail mail or e-mail? How would one go about getting on it?

Dave: Our mailing list is snail mail. They can go to our web page and leave us an e-mail or they can write to us to join.

Our web site is http://www.kidbrothers.org/.

Our e-mail is kidbros@southwind.net.

You can also get that through the web site as well.

Rhonda: On the web, people sometimes ask personal questions - about Rich's love life - directions to the grave...where would you like to see the line drawn - at what point is it too personal?

Dave: You know, he was a public person and as that, people want to know about him obviously. The problem is that no one wants their private life public. His love life makes no difference to anyone. No one will be drawn closer to God to know who he loved on this earth.

As far as the grave, my mom couldn't even go to the grave on the date of his death without people standing and watching. Some were polite and walked away, others were not. There is a point that as a mother or brother or sister that you say, "*You know what? Enough*." He shared his life with the world. There are some things we just don't want to share. If there is something that can encourage, strengthen, or help people to draw closer to the Lord, we want that. But personal facts won't do that. So I think that's where the line ought to be. That's not to protect him, that's just to say - what's the point?

Rhonda: The Ragamuffin Mail List sent in a few questions...would you mind entertaining them?

Dave: That's fine.

Rhonda: Mike Barlow from Ohio asks.....Which one of Rich's songs was your favorite?

Dave: Wow, that's hard. That's really hard. I think *Heaven In His Eyes* was my favorite for years.

Rhonda: And he did that first with Zion right?

Dave: Yeah*, Growing Young, Hard to Get,*

Dave: I really like *Jesus*. I think for me, you could pretty much go down the list of most, if not all of his albums and I would like about 3/4 or more.

Rhonda: Okay...you're on a desert island...you can only take one of his CD's - which one?

Dave: *Liturgy*. I think without question.

Rhonda: Me too - ready for another Mike question?

Dave: Sure.

Rhonda: What was Rich like to grow up with? Most people don't realize the age gap.

Dave: Well, I didn't grow up with him. He was 12 years older. So I grew up waiting for him to get off the bus and wrestling with him and him beating me to a pulp. And then going to see concerts and visiting. It was pretty cool.

Rhonda: And the last one from Mike...What is your funniest memory of Rich?

Dave: Him not being able to get into his own concert!!

Rhonda: You're kidding - do tell!

Dave: We were in Knoxville, TN, and right before the concert he decided that he and Michael Aukofer and us - me, Robin and Jonathan, should go to get something to eat.

So we're eating at some restaurant and he realizes it's time for the concert to start. So it's pouring down rain and we run to the car and rush to the concert. I dropped Rich, Michael - who carried Jonathan like a football - and Robin off at the door and went to park the car. When they got in the door, the ticket taker wouldn't let him in without a ticket. And he told the guy, but you don't understand, I'm Rich Mullins. And the guy responded, yeah, yeah, that's what they all say. There was a picture on a poster in the lobby and they got it and showed it to the guy. So he finally got in. And Michael had to sneak on-stage because the Ragamuffins were already on stage playing. Pretty funny.

Rhonda: Okay...from....Kathleen Curzon of Florida...How closely do you work with the ragamuffins?

Dave: Not real closely right now. We have a good relationship with them, I think. But their

thing is music and touring and ours is working on the Rez. So right now there just isn't a lot to do together.

Rhonda: I know you just saw the Ragamuffins in concert - how was that for you?

Dave: It was really good and really hard. I really enjoyed the new stuff. The Jesus Record. I have always loved hearing This Train. And I like to hear Mitch and the Kid Brothers. It was really hard listening to the old stuff. The Rags second set. I think this was the first time that I have heard that stuff that I didn't hear Wayne's voice. It has never mattered who sang his songs I heard his voice. So that was kind of tough. I just stood in the back of the room and sang as loud as I could so that I'd kind of hear it.

Rhonda: I spoke to a certain ragamuffin who was kind of bummed that you had been at that show because the sound wasn't just right...they wanted everything to be perfect for you.

Dave: You know, when I go to a concert I don't care if it is professional. I want to see people singing - not a cd sound. I want to hear people talk and tell me what is in them. I want to participate and I think the rags let that happen. Besides, Wayne never did a perfect performance by those standards either. They did a good job of keeping the atmosphere the same. (forgetting words, getting lost, and finally laughing about it.)

Rhonda: They did that alright!

Dave: LOL

Rhonda: Kim Robson from PA...she's an artist and is going to NM to visit in June and wants to know how to go about teaching there in connection with the Legacy...is that possible?

Dave: She can write us and we'll discuss it.

Rhonda: Vickie Westbrook wants to know about people who aren't musically inclined - is there room for them to help at the foundation?

Dave: I would just tell people who are interested in helping us to just write us. Right now we don't have many opportunities for people to work. But who knows what the future holds.

Rhonda: Okay...here's a good one from Wendy from Ohio...What would have made Rich the most proud of the foundation?

Dave: I think that we are not focusing on trying to do exactly what he wanted to do as far

as programs, but that we are trying to do what he wanted to do at the heart of the matter.

Rhonda: Which is?

Dave: To share the love of Christ. To try to make this life a little better, bring a little hope, share a little joy and please God. Really, I do think that what he would want out of me and anyone else is to look for God's leading and go there. Not what they think Rich Mullins would want them to do.

Rhonda: Finally, from Kathleen - how can we best pray for the foundation?

Dave: Pray that God works. We are really making a conscious effort to wait upon God. Not to make our plans, but to wait for the doors that God opens and then walk through them. So people can pray that we have the eyes to see and the faith to follow.

Rhonda: Great, I think that's it! Anything else you care to add?

Dave: I think Mom would like me to thank everybody again for their prayers and thoughts. I mean, she's still getting cards...and letters...

Thanks to Dave for taking time -
To Robin for setting the interview and typing!
And to Judy for the priceless pictures.

For questions or comments regarding this page, e-mail Rhonda Miskowski

Essential Rich Links:
Legacy of a Kid Brother Of St. Frank
Rhonda's Rich Mullins Page
Danl's Mailing List Archive
Calling Out Your Name
Dave Mullins Interview Part I
The Rich Mullins Memorial Ring
Ragamuffin Mail List

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Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune Interview

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Ragamuffins Headline Mullins Tribute
Susan Hogan Albach
Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune
November 7, 1998

Before he was killed in a vehicle accident last year, Rich Mullins took a boom box and recorded nine new songs he'd written. Those rough cuts, plus the same songs recorded by his band, the Ragamuffins, were released in June in the double-disc package The Jesus Record.

Mullins, who died at age 41, recorded more than 80 songs during his lifetime. His music was prayerful and reflected Jesus' heart for the marginalized. Mullins wrote from the perspective of a sinner yearning for God.

At the height of his career, he took a vow of poverty, chose to live in a hut on a Navajo reservation, formed a lay-Franciscan community of artists and missionaries, and gave much of his money to people in need.

Next Saturday, the Ragamuffins will lead a tribute to Mullins at Bethel College in Arden Hills. Ragamuffin Rick Elias, who produced The Jesus Record and is the lead vocalist on many of its songs, including his own Man of No Reputation, spoke with the Star Tribune recently about the tour.

Star Tribune: How should Rich Mullins be remembered?

Rick Elias: Rich was a very complex person, but he had a very simple and direct faith and almost desperate faith in God's ability. Despite his intelligence and weaknesses, he never used that as an excuse to sidestep God or the responsibility to be obedient or forgiving. That doesn't mean he was always obedient and forgiving.

ST: In his passion for Jesus, he was critical of the church, yet also defended it. How come?

RE: Rich loved church. I can think of about 8 million things I would rather do on a Sunday morning. I question the whole notion of having to listen to some guy get up there and tell us about his week and give us his opinion about scripture. But Rich looked at it and said, "Who said it has to be about you? Who says you have to even like it? Maybe it would be

good for you to go somewhere for about an hour-and-a-half every week and have it be about anything else besides you and what you like and what you want."

ST: How did you meet Mullins?

RE: I met him on a trip to Guatemala with Compassion International. I didn't know him and hadn't heard him, either. He had heard my first record and liked it, and we became fast friends. It wasn't until I got back to the states that I realized he was a big deal in Christian music. Then he asked me to form the Ragamuffin Band.ST: What do you think about the tribute albums being done with Mullins' music?

RE: It would be uncharitable for me to comment on that too much. We're not real crazy about it. You have to question their motives. I think there's a certain amount of ownership about Rich that should be respected and that is through his foundation and his family.

What we did with The Jesus Record was with their blessing and at their request. But The Jesus Record isn't a tribute album. This was Rich's music made exactly as he intended it to be made. Rich felt it was his best work. We wanted to do it well for Rich's foundation, not personal opportunism.

ST: Will the concert be a celebration or more a memorial service?

RE: It depends on the audience. While it can be a traveling memorial service, it's only that in the most celebratory sense of the word. It's not a somber evening. People sing along. Sometimes it hits them on an emotional level. The people performing - we're all like the ongoing musical legacy of Rich Mullins. We sing songs he either wrote or invested himself in.

As much as we reminisce about Rich and honor him, we try to make it as clear as we can that Rich's ultimate goal with his music and his life was to try to draw people, himself included, closer to Christ. That's our goal for the concert - to draw near to Christ through Rich's music.

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Premier Magazine Interview

On 19th September 1997 Rich Mullins was killed in a tragic car accident. In February 1998 I find myself in London's infamous Abbey Road Studio 2 with Rich's longtime friend and 'Ragamuffin', Rick Elias. His challenge, as a record producer, was to bring to fruition Rich Mullins' final album, a project simply titled Jesus.

Several months later in their hometown of Nashville, I meet again with Rick, fellow Ragamuffins Mark Robertson and Aaron Smith and Rich's friend and business manager, Jim Dunning. It's the eve of the Dove Awards and stepping in on the interview (to rescue my flu departed voice!) Electric's front man Sammy Horner hosts the chat about Rich, what he stood for, and the making of the Jesus Record...

About the album...

> *Rick: Originally when Rich approached us about the record he wanted each of us (the members of the Ragamuffin Band) to write two of them and sing those two songs. But I think as time went on we all knew it wasn't going to happen that way, it wasn't going to be as strong as we all thought it should be. Rich himself was very prolific and so it ended up that he wrote almost everything... Rich demo-ed all the songs and we were about two weeks away from going into the studio when he was killed.*

Angela: It's the most obvious concept for the Christian music scene, yet it's never been done...

> *Rick: Yeah, that's exactly it, and I remember someone in the industry saying to us, 'Make sure no-one knows about this record or hears of the title'. And that was long before Rich died!*
>
> *Jim: Rich used to talk about it on stage though. He'd say, 'Y'know I think I'm gonna do this album about Jesus and just call it Ten Songs About Jesus'. And people would laugh. They didn't take it seriously.*
>
> *Rick: The thing is with Rich, you knew if he was going to do it, it was going*

> *to be great. If anyone should tackle the subject in just ten songs, he was the guy.*

Sam: Was it strange recording the album when a guy that you've worked with so much just lost his life?

> *Rick: One thing I keep saying very clearly is 'it is not a tribute record.' Secondly, the record is about Jesus, not about Rich. So in that regard it made it a bit easier to move on. Although when we first started the sessions there was definitely quite a palpable sense of his presence, and a lot of that has to do with the fact that he was just such an amazing songwriter, he could really invest something of himself into his music. But for me as producer, I never got into this stuff like 'What would Rich think...' Rich blessed us by being very specific - which was very unusual for him - about what he thought the record was. We discussed in detail how it should be done, so really it was a matter of just doing it.*

Sam: Nashville is a big music center. Why did you want to go to Abby Road in London to record the orchestral sections?

> *Rick: There are a couple of practical things. It's actually cheaper to record strings in London than here in Nashville. So when we checked out the possibility of recording in England, it turned out that Abbey Road was available and I remember sitting thinking 'Oh my gosh,' I hadn't even thought that it was a possibility. And Rich was a huge John Lennon fan, he would have been thrilled to record in there... The interesting thing is that these guys (the musicians) do sessions every day. They don't know and don't really much care what they're playing, they just read the music, but I had many of them come up and say, 'Who was this guy, this music is beautiful', and I got a chance to tell them a little bit about who Rich was and what we were doing. I feel those string players really brought the level of the record up. That room just had a vibe to it. It was fascinating for me to be there.*

Awards and tribute...

Sam: We have a saying in Ireland, 'When you're dead you're great but when you're alive you sometimes can't pay the bills.' Does it annoy you that Rich is only now getting all this attention?

> *Mark: Rich was nominated for Dove Awards and he didn't win any in his lifetime. Now he's up for four, and odds are he will win one. I think the Dove Awards are so contrary to our faith - to give out awards for 'the best'. The idea of a show to celebrate music related to faith and to perhaps randomly pick bands might be more in keeping with the spirit of what we should be doing as gospel artists. Rich didn't particularly dig that aspect of it. We could be mad about it, but then I guess if any one does deserve to win tonight, he does.*
>
> *Aaron: When Rich died it caused people to reflect on what he'd said and done and who he was and I think a lot of people in the industry realized in the end just what an impact he'd had on Christian music. A lot of times great artists aren't recognized until they're dead and gone, and I think that happened to Rich as far as the industry is concerned. His fans, the people, knew exactly how valuable and treasured he was.*

Sam: When you came to Glasgow I remember we all jammed in the pub one night, and a lot of the guys from the pub came to the show the next night, though they didn't know anything about what you were doing. When they found out Rich had died they were really upset...

> *Rick: He had that impact. I never heard Rich say anything about 'crossing over' with his music. The music Rich played was the same under any circumstances and because of that it had a purity and a sense of conviction that drew people to it. Even non Christians I know, I would play them a Rich Mullins record before I play them something by an artist that is presumably a Christian but making music for the world. I guarantee it has a greater impact on them. Maybe they don't agree with him or understand him, but man, they cannot deny the excellence of what he did. Beyond that, the conviction and truth that he would speak... Rich was one of few Christian artists that really did make music about what he believed with the same passion and energy and excellence as Sting does, or Marilyn Manson does about what they believe.*

About the songs...

> *Rick: It starts out with 'My Deliverer', which is an epic. I view the whole record, from the very beginning, more as a film. It's meant to be taken as a whole piece. You've got a song like 'My Deliverer', which is panoramic, like a huge crane shot, then you've got these other songs that are more like little close ups. You really need to get the whole flow of what is happening and where this record is going. That gave us a lot of freedom, genre wise, in how to approach the whole thing. 'My Deliverer' is my favorite song. It's the one that I knew as a producer that if I dropped the ball on nine songs, I couldn't drop it on that one. I was really afraid that I might, 'cause it was a huge, big song, there's a lot to it. And when it came off I breathed a sigh of relief. It's got amazingly poetic lyrics. Rich had this way of getting a lyric in there that was so well written and you knew you were looking into the man's heart. It's just unbelievable.*
>
> *'Nothing is Beyond You', which Amy Grant sings, is a great song and for a long time we didn't know who was going to sing it. Amy did a great job, she really poured herself into it and made it her own. Then there's 'You Did Not Have A Home', which is one of the first songs Rich played me for the record. It's based around scripture, 'Birds have nests, foxes have dens, the weight of the whole world rests on the shoulders of a homeless man...the world can't stand what it can't own and it can't own you 'cause you did not have a home'. It's lighthearted. Rich considered it a bit of a jab at right wing conservative Christianity. For a guy who had so many opinions he, at the same time, rarely had an axe to grind with people. He did against systems, but not people. He showed an enormous amount of grace towards individuals...*
>
> *Mark: He had a tendency to make fun of every denomination, including his own. He thought we were too precious about little things, and if we really were one body... When we played largely 'religious right' kind of churches the only people he would really praise were the Catholics, 'cause he knew that's who they hated the most. That's the only people he really praised. Except when we played at a Catholic function, then he would put down the Catholics really bad! His message really was just to 'get over yourself'. It wasn't about putting anybody down.*
>
> *Rick: The fifth song is this one called 'Jesus'. The truth is that on the tape*

> *he played us, it perhaps wasn't one of the stronger songs. It lacked a certain amount of the poetry that you came to expect from Rich. It was a very honest, heartfelt admission of broken-ness and it was written in such a way that it was very pleading. But he believed in it... and I'll tell you what, having Ashley (Cleveland) sing it is probably the most proud moment on the record. The minute she opened her mouth it was unbelievable. If there was ever a singer and a song made for each other... it was like seeing a Mary scene. It's got that much power, it's cinematic. And Tom Howard's arrangement is just glorious. There is no way you can listen to that song in the middle of the record and not be touched on some level and challenged as to 'who was this Jesus, and who am I in context to him?' whether you're a believer or not.*
>
> *Then it's 'All the Way to Kingdom Come'. Rich had this ability to write songs that were kind of light and sing-songy and he did it better than most. Phil Keaggy sings on it and it's got a real 'Travelling Wilburies' kind of vibe. We all sing on it. Then 'Man of No Reputation' is a song that I wrote. Rich believed in it before and long after I ever did...*
>
> *'Heaven in His Eyes', I was surprised to find out, is a really old song, written in the late 70s or something. Michael W Smith sings it. And I've got to confess, I was most worried about that song because I couldn't picture any of us singing it and I didn't know who could. But Smitty did a wonderful job.*
>
> *The last song is 'That Where I Am There You...' We were going to make it so Amy and Smitty and all of us sang on it. Then at the last minute we played Rich's original tape and Aaron started playing his drums along to it just to warm up and I said, 'Hey that sounds great, let's do it like that', and we tried one pass on it and again it was one of those magical moments, just playing along with Rich. At the end of the song you hear Rich laugh and some guy starts clapping and it's a really nice way to end the record.*

The impact...

Sam: So what's the other record in the two CD pack?

> *Rick: The other disc is Rich's demo that he did on a boom box in this*

> *church. The beauty of this thing is, it's one hour of his life. It's him sitting there playing the songs top to bottom. He did nine of them. He wouldn't sing 'Man of No Reputation', he made me sing it later. And I wish to God he had sung it. If I have a regret, it's that... But the disc is compelling. It's the way we've been listening to it for six months.*

Angela: Are you happy with the record, as both producer and Rich's friend?

> *Rick: Yes. I couldn't have done any better. But only an idiot could have produced this thing poorly, because of the nature of the songs. All I had to do was sit there and let them come to life, and cast the record well. At the end of the day, all the DNA for the arrangements was in those songs. Over the time people came in and every now and again I'd stand back and play them something and they would fall apart. I think people are going to bring a lot of baggage to the record. The record is that important. And the only way to overcome the baggage is to listen to the record repeatedly. If people do that they will find that it takes them through a multitude of emotions. From anger, to an enormous sense of loss, doubt, fear, mystery, joy, hope, and ultimately faith. I think that's what Rich wanted of the record. All those things are embodied in our pursuit of Christ and all those things were embodied in Rich and were certainly manifested through his writing. That's the power of the record and in itself it will have a cathartic affect on any listener, especially those who were fans of his and haven't had a chance to resolve feelings about his death.*
>
> *Mark: I think the one that hit me most was when Kenny Greenburg, Ashley Cleveland's husband, came in to listen to 'Jesus' and he started tearing up, visibly loosing it. It didn't hit me for a while, I just thought, 'Well, he misses Rich', then I thought how amazing it must be that the woman that you love is singing a song that was written by the man that led him to the Lord. What a combo for him. It's worth recording just to give it to Kenny. And I hope that people can personalize it on different levels like that.*
>
> *Jim: The thing is, this record needed to be done. And I know these guys thought long and hard about it, but they did the right thing. It was one of the weird thoughts I had the day after the accident. The day Rich was killed I got my copy of the demo tape in the mail from him. That night we listened to it at home. The next day I had such a strong thought that we needed to*

> *do this. It wasn't right to talk about it then, but what struck me most was that before he died, Rich was clear that he wanted Rick to produce and the Ragamuffins to sing...*
>
> *Rick: Yeah, Rich didn't enjoy recording. He loved collaborative efforts. And that's exactly what happened here. Everybody had to pitch in, from the label, to management, to the band, to the ancillary musicians, everybody for the right reasons got on the same page and made this thing happen. This really is the result of one man's vision and a whole lot of people getting behind it to see it come about. Not many records are made like that anymore.*

Angela: So Rich had the last laugh?

> *Rick: Yeah, and he would've had a blast making this record. We did.*

Transcribed by Sandy McMullen

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August 1998 Real Videos Transcript

kidbrothers.net/interviews/realvideos.html

Transcribed by Jeannie Goins

Mark: Hi, we're the Ragamuffin Band, and we're your hosts tonight on Real Videos.

(Program Intro)

Rick: We're the Ragamuffin Band, and I'm Rick Elias.

Mark: I'm Mark Robertson.

Jimmy I'm Jimmy A.

Aaron: Aaron Smith.

Rick: And we just completed The Jesus Record, which is not a tribute record, and furthermore, it's not really even about Rich Mullins, it's about Jesus, and that's the way he intended it. It's 10 songs about Jesus, which was at one time the earli est working title. It's his last work, and it was a very ambitious project as far as the scope of it. We were fortunate enough also to have the last demo he ever did, which he did on a boom box in a church, and so that the entire record will be the prod uced versions on one disc and Rich's demo cleaned up, somewhat, but essentially untouched, on the other disc. We had some guest artists, people that knew Rich and that fit into the musical fabric of the record seamlessly. And those artists were Ashley Cleveland, Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, and Phil Keaggy, all of whom knew Rich and admired him, and were friends with him. It was just really, probably the most, in some ways, the most difficult, and definitely the most compelling record I've ever been involved in.

(Amy Grant clip from Homeless Man video)

(Ashley Cleveland clip from Homeless Man video)

("Brother's Keeper" video)

Mark: We were about two weeks away from starting the record when Rich passed away. So we had many meetings, we had the songs picked out, Rich had picked the 10 songs he wanted. And we decided first of all, Rich had considered this the most important record of his career, we don't know why. He felt the content of just focusing on the mind of Christ, meditating on that, was the first record that really had to be made by this band, the rest were just fun to make. And so we felt like there was no way we could let these songs just disappear. So we just went forward completely as planned, and the only change was that obviously, Rich wasn't able to join us. Apart from that, it's the same exact record, we just went in and did it the same way we would ha ve, and I guess we can hope he'd be happy with it, but we wouldn't know.

(Steve Taylor clip from Homeless Man video)

(Michael W. Smith clip from Homeless Man video)

("Secret Ambition" video by Michael W. Smith)

Jimmy: You know, this record, I remember, as a dream a couple of years ago, him saying to all of us as a group, you know, I want to make this record, and it's going to be about Jesus, and it's going to be this incredible investigation into the life an d character of Christ. And I want two songs from each of you, and not only are you going to write them, but you're going to sing them. And we insisted that that not be the case - maybe writing, that would be fun, but we all felt compelled that he should be the one that sang them.....

(Clip of Rich singing "You Did Not Have a Home")

Jimmy: Ironically, he got his way, that he wanted us to sing them, and somehow that happened, we had to do it, cause he wasn't here.

(Clip of Rich playing the hammer dulcimer)

Mark: He would always have this childlike thing about it where you would show up for rehearsal, and he would hand you an instrument that not only could you - you didn't know how to play, but you'd never seen before, and

just go well, I mean, we've got two days, you can get it!

(Laughter from the others)

Mark: And then he'd write out this incredibly intense piece of music for you to learn in those two days, when you're also rehearsing 20 other songs you dont' know. And to him it was just all fun. He didn't care if it sounded good, it was trying, a nd it was stretching yourself that was important. It was the fun of the moment, he didn't care if it was even technically good as long as you were having fun and challenging yourself.

(Rich clip (speaking) from Homeless Man video)

Aaron: I liked his free spirit, you know, I liked his creative abilities, his willingness to take on a challenge.

(Rich clip (speaking) from Homeless Man video)

Rick: You don't love somebody just a little bit. You love 'em or you don't. And I just loved him, I loved everything about him. I loved him even when I was mad at him, which was often, you know, and when you became Rich's friend, you were his fr iend for life. You got the whole package. And yeah, I really miss him.

("Hold Me, Jesus" video)

(Ashley Cleveland clip from Homeless Man video)

(Rich (speaking) clip from Homeless Man video)

("God So Loved" video by Jaci Valesquez)

Rick: Thanks so much for watching Real Videos tonight. If anything you saw here tonight is causing you to ask questions and you need some answers, feel free to write Real Videos at P. O. Box A, Santa Ana, California 92711, or call the number on the screen, and they'll be happy to answer any questions you might have. Thanks.

Mark: Bye.

Aaron & Jimmy: Good night.

("A Man You Could Write About" video by 4Him)

Transcription by Jeannie Goins

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Jesus Record Special - Soul to Soul

kidbrothers.net/interviews/soul-2-soul-fal98.html

The Jesus Record Special
Soul to Soul
Hosted by Chris Coppernoll
Fall 1998

Rich Mullins: What parades itself as piety often is nothing but pure doubt. What C. S. Lewis said, and what I've come to suspect is being very true, is, that the thing that is common, is the thing that is most like art. It's when a writer, when a painter, when a musician, is able to take that thing that you've always suspected and give it words, that's when you respond to it.

Announcer: You are listening to Soul to Soul, a weekly look at the people who make contemporary Christian music....

Mike Beck: Before he passed away last fall, Rich Mullins began work on what he called The Jesus Record. And now the project stands as his legacy to Christian music. Rich Mullins and The Jesus Record, next.

[Surely God Is With Us]

MB: Welcome to another edition of Soul to Soul. I'm Mike Beck, in this week for Chris Coppernoll. Each and every week you can find Soul to Soul on great radio stations like 99.7 KTSH Oklahoma City, OK, and 1340, WJYI, Milwaukee, WI.

MB: It hardly seems possible that it's been almost a year since the untimely and tragic death of Christian Music's Poet Laureate, Rich Mullins. In the weeks before he died, Rich recorded a demo cassette of nine new songs that were to appear on his first new project for his new record company, Myrrh Records. The project was to be called, The Jesus Record, a project that Rich said was "needed"-for himself and his friends. A friend recalled Rich saying, "These are the songs that I want to do, and this is what I want to say about Jesus." Although Rich is now gone home, to the place he so longed to be, the songs he left behind still speak with powerful voices. A group of Rich's close friends determined to complete his unfinished opus. They included Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Ashley Cleveland, Phil Keaggy, and his longtime backup band, the Ragamuffins. This week we are featuring many of the songs from the new album. In a slight departure from our normal format, we've decided to step back and allow Rich to speak to you directly, in a manner of speaking, about the things that were so very important to who he was, and who he was

trying to be, in Christ. Here then, is the heart, and the musical legacy, of Rich Mullins.

[That Where I Am, There You...]

RM: I got a great lesson in humility. It was after my first album came out, an album that nobody bought, and that no one would play on the radio, and... I've always been a little arrogant, I think, about my own work. I'm kind of a fan of my own. I really do like my music. And I know that upsets people because they think I should be more humble, but I kinda go, it would be ridiculous for me to go to all the bother to write a song that I didn't like. So I'm not gonna pretend like, "Oh, gee, I dunno..." I really like my songs. I don't know that they're great songs, but I know I like them. But I was really kinda going, "Wow, nobody bought this album, what's wrong?" And I went, "Gee, I'm gonna start writing really cool stuff instead of trying to say what I think is important." And about the time that I was, right after my first album had totally bombed, and we were starting to work on a second album, and I was getting really serious about picking out songs, a friend of mine shot himself in the stomach. And I suddenly... and I remember very clearly, I was walking up a street that runs into Wheaton, IL. And I remember, I could tell you the spot where I was, when I finally figured out what this song... I had been playing this song for a long time. I generally write the accompaniment first, and then you just kind of drop a melody over the accompaniment so that it hangs nice. And then you... my thing with lyrics is that lyrics, lyrics are sort of like subtitles, you tell people who might not figure out what the song is about without the help of lyrics, what the song is about. Does that make sense? So anyway, suddenly I went, this song is not for any record, this song is not... this song is for this friend of mine, because he shot himself. Fortunately he didn't, wasn't very accurate about the way he shot himself, and he lived. But I thought, I've got to say something to him. And that's when I wrote, You're on the Verge of a Miracle. Which, then, ironically, became the first song that the radio people started playing in heavy rotation. And for a lot of people, they still will talk about, "Wow, that was your first radio success," "That was your first song that you had that went to Number One." For me that song is always a song that I wrote for this friend of mine who was so, in such a state of darkness, that I just...all I wanted to say to him was, hang on, because the light can break through. And, that was..and then after the success of that particular song, I felt somewhat ashamed for having thought about how can I write something very popular. And what I began to suspect, was that there were a lot of people who needed to know that they were on the verge of a miracle.

[My Deliverer-Ragamuffins]

RM: You know, I was talking to a friend of mine lately and he said, "I just don't like Christians." And he said, "I believe in Jesus, and I believe in all that stuff, I just hate hanging out with Christians." And I said, "Well, you and me are friends, and I'm Christian,"

and he said, "Yeah, you're different." And I said, "Well, I'll take that as a compliment, but I'm not sure what else you mean." And then I began to name several people that I knew that he knew that were Christians. And eventually what we came around to in the conversation was, what he didn't like was that he didn't really know most Christians. That a lot of the people that he went to church with alienated him, because they, all he knew about them was what they believed, what picket lines they were going to stand on, whether or not they were literalists in their interpretation of the Scriptures. They all had like a bunch of doctrinal positions, they were all very, like, I am a non-smoker, I am a tea-totaler, I am a whatever, they all knew their place on a number of moral issues. But none of them were able to communicate who they were to him. So they seemed very boring. And I can understand that. They seemed like non-people, they seemed like chess pieces. And I think that one of the things that is very threatening to many of us, is, we go, if people really knew me, they'd never believe in Jesus. And I kind of want to say, no, that's exactly wrong. That people will never come to know Jesus as long as we choose to hide ourselves. That until I can be vulnerable, until I can... and I don't think that that necessarily means that I need to go out and get on the radio and announce all of my private sins. I think that I can be very honest without being hurtful to people. You know what I mean is? But I think, yeah, I think that what will please God is if I have progressed toward being the person whose name is written on that white stone that He will give me.

[Heaven in His Eyes]

MB: I'm Mike Beck and you're listening to Soul to Soul. Thanks for spending some time with us. We are focusing on the ministry and the musical legacy of Rich Mullins as we feature music from the new project, The Jesus Record. Rich was not a man to mince words. He felt that many of the institutions and traditions that the church has created hindered more than advanced the cause of Christ, and he was not afraid to say so. We continue now with more candid thoughts from Rich Mullins.

RM: One criticism I would make of evangelical Christianity, is that it is marked by movements. You know, we had back in the Seventies, the Time Management Movement, that became very important. Then there was the Spiritual Gift Movement, and everyone got really interested in spiritual gifts. Then there was the, you know, Jesus Is Coming Again Movement. You know, we just hop from one new fascination to another, and never really get into the depths of any of them, and pretty much obscure the real meaning, and certainly, empty the real power of all these things that suggest greatness. Does that make sense? And I think that what we like, I think because, maybe more than ever before, twentieth-century people live without any identity. We live without any sense of being anything other than a consumer, other than something that needs. Other than something that has wants. I mean, many of us define ourselves in terms of sexual preference, we

define ourselves in terms of recreational preferences, you know what I mean is? Yeah, so who are you, what do you do, what do you like. We talk about ourselves in those kinds of terms. And I think that it's largely because we live on sensation, and we very seldom get beyond sensation, into anything that's really essential. And I think it's because we're afraid if we ever get past, if we ever get past this little shallow thing that we're playing out, that we're gonna find that there's nothing under it. I find that what parades itself as piety often is nothing but pure doubt. That it's really agnosticism dressed up in a lot of religious jargon.

[All The Way To Kingdom Come]

RM: Everybody thinks that writers sit around in this kind of perpetual fog of inspiration, and it's really just a fog of confusion. Sometimes it's a caffeine buzz - you never know exactly what it is. But we generally are not, I don't think most people I know who write, if you were to be serious with them, most people would not say, "Yes, God appeared to me and gave me this song." For me, my understanding of the way things work, is that after God made man, He told him to reproduce and be fruitful and multiply, which I think is a wonderful command that I'm not allowed to follow because I'm not married. But He also told us to subdue the universe, that we were to... and I don't think that He meant by that, to exploit it. I think that what He meant by that was that we were to try to create order out of chaos, that we were to try to organize things. The first job He gave Adam, interestingly enough, was the job of naming the animals. Which... and the word there for naming really means categorize, sort of. It kind of says, call out what they are. Tell me what these are. So, I think work is a very, very holy thing. And I take work very seriously. I think that most of us think that spiritual exercises are what you do once you get home from your work. But I think that what you do at your work is just as spiritual in your, you know, in that twenty minutes that you have set aside for reading Oswald Chambers or whatever. So for me, my songs are not a matter of something that God has given me. I am very thankful to God that He gave me ears, that He gave me parents who allowed me to take piano lessons, that He gave me some natural talent in the area of music. I'm very thankful to God that He gave me an environment to grow up in wherein I was taught to listen, wherein I was taught to appreciate things. And then, what I give Him back when I write a song like "When He rolls up His sleeves, He ain't just puttin' on the Ritz," that is my worship to Him. And I think He accepts it, not because it's great music - if you want to talk about great music, man, there was enough great music written by the time Bach died, that none of the rest of us ever needed to take up a pen and write a note. You don't write because the world has need of your music. You write because you have a need to make order, to organize things. And if you are a musician, you express that very human, very common need, by making music. If you're a baker, you do it by making bread. It's all the same goodness. It just expresses itself in different areas.

[Jesus]

MB: Michael W. Smith lent his considerable talents to the recording of The Jesus Record. He shared with us memories of his good friend:

Michael W. Smith: He was so unique. First of all, there was nobody like Rich, nobody even close to being like Rich. And he was a poet, which I think we have very few of, and... probably, it was just the way he thought and the way he lived his life, that I envied. All the time. And I know it's different that - things would be different if he'd had a family, and it's a little different because I'm a family guy. Rich was never married, and he lived on the Indian reservation. He had so very few personal belongings, I mean, he just didn't acquire anything. And I wanted to go live, I just always wanted to go do what Rich did, because he wasn't distracted. And... I'm gonna miss the songs. Because nobody wrote songs like Rich. And I miss... when I was with him, I never knew if he was gonna, like, say something totally bizarre - which he would all the time, he was always making us laugh - or say something so profound that you were speechless. And he did that a lot.

[You Did Not Have a Home]

RM: Someday we'll be called to give an account. And I don't think our crown will be the music we wrote, I don't think our crown will be the words we wrote. I think it will be how we have built up the body of Christ, how we have torn down walls of suspicion and walls of fear. How we have shed light on false doctrines, how we've been encouraging, on truth, those are the things I think - and how that affects lives. And how we made Jesus visible.

Announcer: You've been listening to Soul To Soul...

Transcribed by SandyMcMullen.

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Soul 2 Soul Excerpts

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Soul 2 Soul Excerpts
Christopher Lee Coppernoll
1998

I'm Not Ashamed

Every insight the late Rich Mullins ever gave seemed to be based on his own real-life experience. I never met Rich Mullins in person. Once, when he was at the radio station KLTY in Dallas, and I was in Nashville, we spoke over the phone for almost an hour. I can't remember a single answer that wasn't soaked with the reality of Jesus.

Maybe more than ever before twentieth-century people live without any identity. They live without any sense of being anything other than something with needs and wants. We define ourselves in terms of our sexual preference. We define ourselves in terms of recreational preferences. We talk about ourselves in those kinds of terms. I think it's because we largely live on sensation. We rarely get beyond sensation into anything that's essential. I think it's because we're afraid that if we ever get past this little shallow thing that we're playing out that we're going to find out there's nothing under it. I find that what parades itself as piety often is nothing but pure doubt. That it's really agnosticism dressed up in a lot of religious jargon.

So for me, I think it would be really easy to say, "I think what would really please God is if I don't dance, I don't chew, and I don't go with girls who do." It would be easy to say, "Oh, gee, I think what will really please God is if I became an evangelist and convert a thousand people." It's much more difficult I think for me to become who I am and who He created me to be because no one else can tell me when I've accomplished that. But that's one of the things I find beautiful the book of Revelation is when Jesus says, "To him who overcomes I will give a white stone and on that stone is a name known only to the person who receives it and to me." The white stone signifies victory and could very well hint at purity. Jesus said only the pure heart will see God. I would love to hear that in a sermon sometime instead of being asked to come forward. I would love to hear a pastor say, "If you want to see God then make your heart pure."

The significant thing to me is there is a name on that stone that is the name Jesus knows me by. My mother dies not know me by that name. My friends don't know me by that name. No one in this world, including myself, knows who I really am. I think that when we

see ourselves in light of Jesus, which will only happen when we give up ourselves and begin to seek Him wholeheartedly, then we will eventually grow into the person that He meant for us to be. When we see our name on that stone we'll say, "Wow, that's me! How did You know me when I couldn't even know myself?" For me, that's part of the goal of spiritual maturity.

[pp.30-31]

The Message

Rich Mullins died in September 1997. The following interview took place with Rich a year earlier. Mostly we talked about what Rich believed. He had moved to the Southwest to teach music to Navajo children on a reservation. He spoke candidly about his own spiritual life.

Part of my motivation for moving out to the reservation, quite honestly, was that I had become very weary of twentieth-century American evangelical Christianity. I think it's ok. I don't have anything against it. I just don't think it's the whole picture. I think that putting yourself in the midst of a culture unlike the one you grew up in helps you to keep some sort of sense of balance in the way you view your faith, your life, and things going on around you.

I'm learning much more about being receptive to the work of God. I suppose I'm an evangelical. I think I'm sort of a lapsed evangelical or I used to flirt with it. I'm not sure what I've ever been if you really want to know the whole truth. There's this real unconscious sort of spiritual grooming going on all the time - not growing, just grooming. There's all that lingo, that &345 "anointed" business. "Saved." "Anointed." "Blessed." It's cool to be around people who for no good reason have chosen a different lingo. So instead of saying, "That song was really anointed," they say, "That song really touched me." Which I think is the same thing that white middle-class Christians mean when they say "anointed." I'm not sure what they mean. My understanding of "anointed" in the Bible is they did it to people. The idea of a song being "anointed" is just really bizarre to me.

I think the one thing in my own spiritual life that's the most crippling to me is to become overly comfortable, to become overly familiar. To treat things that were holy as if they were not special. When you hear a person who has grown up being a shepherd talk about the Good Shepherd it brings this whole new side of the picture to me. It challenges the images that I contrived when I heard stories about the Good Shepherd. I think that most of the middle-class Christians are very sincere in their faith. I just think that for all of us, it's very easy to become very narrow.

I know that a lot of people think I'm this kind of liberal or something. I don't like the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative.' I think I'm more conservative than most conservatives and more liberal than most liberals. I think if you ever met a good conservative or a good liberal, you'd probably like them very much. But it's hard to find a good one of either of those.

The thing that I generally do [to deal with the different understanding of God in the Navajo nation] is I listen respectfully - even though as a Christian I am a monotheist and have a system of theology that I've worked out for myself that is very different from the traditional Navajo religion. I still believe what marks us as Christians is not our doctrine in terms of a doctrinal statement. What marks us as Christians is our love for people. And if you love people you respect them. When someone who comes from a different religion, who comes from even a false religion, speaks, you listen respectfully to them. You know, I have a great mom. Once we were talking about a friend of ours who - it's just wild that she and my mom are friends. I asked, "Do you ever feel weird around her?" and my mom said, "Yeah, sure I do!" But here's the deal: No one was ever won into the kingdom of God through snobbery. We come to know Christ through love. I really believe that. I'll tell you the truth, I think that all these doctrinal statements that all the congregations come up with over the years are basically just not very worthwhile. I don't mean to sound mean toward the people who came up with them. I understand in the past there have been many heretical movements, and we still need to maintain sound doctrine in terms of a good understanding of how God works and operates. But I think our real doctrine is that doctrine that is born out in our character. I think you can profess the Apostles' Creed until Jesus returns, but if you don't love somebody you never were a Christian.

[pp. 47-49]

Thunderbolts and Lightning: The Writing of Music for God

Rich Mullins always had an answer for every question he was asked. On the topic of songwriting, he qualified as an expert. The song Awesome God is undeniably a classic.

I think that listening is the better part of music. People will ask me how to become a good writer, and my general answer, not that I would know, but if I can be presumptuous enough to answer, is to be a good reader. The best way to become a good singer is to become a good listener. One of the wonderful things about teaching music is, I think, the things that are important in music are just important in life.

Expecting an 'awesome' story, I asked Rich to tell how he wrote his most famous song, Awesome God.

I was trying to stay awake. I was driving a little four-cylinder Ford Ranger and I had more weight than I could pull uphill. There's something really musical and kind of mystifying about the way that the more hallelujah kind of oriented preachers go at it. It's very rhythmic. It's very cool. So I was just kind of yelling Bible verses at cars as they would go by me, and that's how I wrote that.

It's a very boring story, and see, that's what nobody gets. Everybody thinks that writers sit around in this perpetual fog of inspiration, and it's really just a fog of confusion. Sometimes it's a caffeine buzz, you never know exactly what it is. I think that most people that write, if they were honest, wouldn't say, "Yes, God appeared to me and gave me this song." For me, my understanding of the way things work is that after God made man, He told him to reproduce and be fruitful. It's a wonderful command that I'm not allowed to follow because I'm not married. He also told us to subdue the universe. I don't think He meant to exploit it, but that we were to try to create order out of chaos and organize things. The first job He gave Adam was the job of naming the animals. The word there for "naming" really means to sort of categorize. He kind of says, "Call out what they are. Tell Me what these are." I think work is a very, very holy thing, and I take work very seriously. Most of us think that spiritual exercises are something you do once you get home from work, but I think what you do at your work is just as spiritual as the twenty minutes you have set aside to read Oswald Chambers. So for me, my songs are not a matter of something God has given me. I am grateful to God that He gave me ears, that He gave me parents who allowed me to take piano lessons, that He gave me some natural talent in the area of music. I'm very thankful to God that He gave me an environment to grow in where I was taught to listen and appreciate things. Then what I give Him back when I write a song like "When He rolls up His sleeves He ain't just puttin' on the ritz," that is my worship to Him, and I think He accepts it, not because it's 'great' music.

If you want to talk about 'great music,' there was enough great music written by the time Bach died that none of us ever needed to pick up a pen and write a note. You don't write because the world has need of your music; you write because you have a need to make order, to organize things. If you're a musician you express that very human, very common need by making music. If you're a baker, you do it by making bread. It's all the same goodness, it just expresses itself in different areas.

[pp. 99-101]

I asked the late Rich Mullins to think back to when he first started recording, and if he ever thought one day they would release an album of his greatest hits.

Well, some days I did and some days I didn't. There were times when I would say, "Wow, this is a great song" and other times I'd say, "Wow, nobody is going to get this."

I got a great lesson in humility. It was after my first album came out - an album that nobody bought and that no one would play on the radio. I've always been a little arrogant about my own work. I'm kind of a fan of my own. I really do like my own music. I know that upsets people because they think I should be more humble. But it would be ridiculous for me to go to all the bother to write a song that I didn't like. So I'm not going to pretend, saying, "Oh gee, I don't know..." I really like my songs. I don't know if they're great songs, but I know I really like them.

But I was saying, "Wow, no one bought this album? What's wrong?" I thought, "Gee, I'm going to start writing really cool stuff instead of trying to say what is really important." About the time that my album had totally bombed and we were starting to work on the second album, and I was getting really serious at picking out songs, a friend of mine shot himself in the stomach. I finally figured out what this song was about - I'd been playing this song for a long time. Generally, I write the accompaniment first and then you just drop a melody over the accompaniment so that it hangs nice. My thing with lyrics is that lyrics are sort of like subtitles. You tell people who might not figure out what the song is about without the help of lyrics. Suddenly I realized this song is not for any record, this song is for this friend of mine. Fortunately, he wasn't very accurate about the way he shot himself, and he lived. But I thought, "I've got to say something to him," and that's when I wrote, You're on the Verge of a Miracle.

Then, ironically, that became the first song the radio people started playing in heavy rotation. A lot of people will still talk about, "Wow, that was your first radio success" or "That was your first song that went to number one." For me, that song is always a song that I wrote for this friend of mine who was in such a state of darkness, and all I wanted to say to him was hang on because the light can break through.

After the success of that particular song, I felt somewhat ashamed for having thought about how I could write something very popular. What I began to suspect was that there were a lot of people who needed to know that they were on the verge of a miracle, a lot of people who needed to hear about the other side of the world. I can just about go down the list of titles [on Songs] and say, "Oh, I remember why I wrote that song. It was for this person in response to this situation."

One thing we all think is that our lives are so unique and so bizarre that no one else could possibly enter into them. Sometimes artists like to be a little off the wall, because as an artist you want people's attention, and shock is one way of getting that attention. But C. S. Lewis said, and I've come to expect that it's very true, that the thing that is common is the thing that is most like art. When a writer, when a painter, when a musician is able to take the thing that you've always suspected and give it words, then you respond to it. This is

very Tolstoyan, too, so C. S. Lewis wasn't all by himself in this kind of thinking. I've been pretty much all around the world, and no matter where you're at they respond pretty much the same.

At the deepest level all we need to know is that there really is a God and that He really is good and that He does love us and that we are accepted by Him, that we can be forgiven. Those things are very important to people everywhere. People sometimes make a big deal that I've never done the crossover thing, which, the truth is, I haven't been in love in so many years that I don't think I could write a very good love song.

But then once again, I think there's nowhere my selfishness is more visible than in the way I write. This album [Songs] represents ten years of work in the music industry. Someday we'll be called to give an account and I don't think our crown will be the music we wrote; I think it will be how we have built up the body of Christ, how we have torn down walls of suspicion and walls of fear, how we have shed light on false doctrines, how we've been encouraging truth and how that affects lives, and how we made Jesus visible.

I've never been tempted to write about stuff that I didn't think would help us, because I do believe someday I will die and there will be a judgment. I'm not afraid necessarily of going to hell. I don't think God would have gone to the lengths that He went to forgive me if He were just going to condemn me in the end. Jesus talked of judgment as a matter of what we do with our lives: Did we visit those in prison, did we give to the poor? You know, I used to think it was for the advantage of the people in jail and for those people who were naked and hungry. Now I think that He asks us to do that not so that they can be saved, but so we can be. If we want to meet Jesus it won't likely be at church, although I'm a big believer in going to church. I think that when we meet Christ it will be somewhere outside the camp. It will be where people have been marginalized, people who have been literally imprisoned. We will meet Him where we least expect to.

[pp. 119-122]

How to Shock Soccer Moms and Be a B.M.O.C.

I was talking to a friend of mine and he said, "You know, I just don't like Christians. I believe in Jesus and all that stuff, but I just hate hanging out with Christians." I said, "Yeah? You and me are friends, and I'm a Christian." He said, "Yeah, you're different." I said, "Well, I'll take that as a compliment, but I'm not sure what else you mean."

I began to name several people that he knew who were Christians and eventually what we came around to in the conversation was - what he didn't like was - he didn't really

know most Christians. A lot of the people that he went to church with alienated him. All he knew about them was what they believed, what picket lines they were going to stand on, whether or not they were literalists in their interpretation of Scripture. They all had a lot of doctrinal positions: I am a nonsmoker. I am a teetotaler. I am a 'whatever.' They all knew their place on a number of moral issues, but none of them were able to communicate who they were to him, so they seemed very boring and I can understand that. They seemed like non-people, like chess pieces.

I think one thing that is threatening to a good many of us is that we think, "If people really knew me they'd never believe in Jesus." And I want to say, "No, that's exactly wrong." People will never know Jesus as long as we choose to hide ourselves. I don't think that necessarily means I need to go out and get on the radio to announce my private sins. I think that I can be very honest without being hurtful to people. What I think will please God is if I have progressed to being that person whose name is written on that white stone that He will give me.

Rich Mullins' words challenge us to live honestly in front of others. Or are we simply "chess pieces" standing at attention, never showing weakness?

[pp. 210-211]

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For Such A Time As This: An Interview With Dave Mullins

kidbrothers.net/interviews/dave/bro.html

Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

~ II Kings 2:12-14

Englewood Christian Church is tucked away in the kudzu laced hills of Tennessee and they are kicking off their revival services with a speaker they booked a year in advance. His name is proudly displayed on the doors of the church: **Evangelist David Mullins.**

I file in with the rest of the congregation to hear Dave preach. There is no doubt he is Rich's brother; same crooked grin, same boyish charm, same gestures and the same endearing unpretentious manner. It is a comparison he has endured for as long as he can remember and one he doesn't mind.

Like any good revival service, it is followed by lots and lots of food.

While we line up and fill our plates, Dave is approached by a lady.

"I just want you to know that I'm a product of your brother's ministry," she says and a gracious Dave nods and smiles.

"That's great!" he exclaims as if he'd not heard this story a hundred times before. I remind him later he will hear those words for the rest of his life.

He calls it a "tough blessing" but a blessing none the less.

I sit with Dave and his bride, Robin (who did the better part of her growing up in Englewood) and their two adorable children.

Jonathan, 7, wants to know if he can go outside and play, and Kacie, 3, is asking mommy

for yet another piece of chocolate cake.

In between their sweet, irresistible pleas we chat about Rich, the Dove, fraudulent Internet nieces and favorite mother-in- laws. Afterwards we head toward the home of Dave's hosts, where he'll be staying in Tennessee for this week of revival. The beyond perfect weather beckons us outside and we search out the most shaded spot on the deck to talk about life without Rich and the call to carry on....

R.M. "Tell me about the foundation you're starting in Rich's name."

D.M. "A lot of different people in different places wanted to do something like this. It was really a kind of neat thing. The family had been thinking about it but we didn't know how to go about it. Word got out to the others who had been thinking about it and it just came together nicely. What we hope to do, there's a guy who has 10 camps down in the South West on the reservations and our primary focus to start with will be working with those camps and doing programming. Ideas that Rich had included bringing in Christian artists from Nashville to teach the kids music and some other arts and then tie in with that the love of Christ and the Gospel."

R.M. "So you are moving to Wichita and setting up the headquarters there?"

D.M. "Right."

R.M. "What's the official name again?"

D.M. "The Legacy of Kid Brothers Of St. Frank"

R.M. "What's wrong with kid sisters?"

D.M. (Laughter) "Uh...well...."

R.M "Nevermind....So, what's your role going to be exactly?"

D.M. "You know, it's an odd thing trying to define my role. I don't know. Right now its me and another lady who are going to be working at it and since there's nothing set up and running and we're doing it all from scratch. I think we're just going to be feeling our way and figuring out what our strengths and weaknesses are and how to go about accomplishing the goal. I'm not big on titles. I'm not worried about it. If we can work together and get done what needs to be done, that's what's important."

R.M. "So, you're leaving your church in West Virginia. You've been there how long?"

D.M. "Nine years. It's odd because when we first started talking about the whole

foundation idea I had no interest in it. I wanted to be on the Board of Directors to make sure we stayed as close to things that Rich would've done and then we started talking about it fairly soon after the accident.

About the first part of December one morning I woke up and it was like, 'Man, I'm suppose to do more than that.' And so I knew Robin would hate it because she's lived in West Virginia longer than anywhere and that's home to her. So, I prayed about it and thought about it and finally talked to her about it and said 'I don't know why but I feel like this is suppose to happen and I know you are going to hate this and if you say no we'll drop it right here but I think we need to check into it. If we knock on this door and God opens it then I think we have to go.' She said you're right, I hate the idea but I agree we need to check into it.

So, I made a list to God of all the reasons [leaving West Virginia] was an idiotic idea and all the reasons it won't work and told Him if You want it to work this is what has to happen. And amazingly he turned a lot of those road blocks into people and things that encouraged me to go on with it. I thought my mom would really hate the idea. She doesn't want me in his shadow and she doesn't want people to use me to feel like they are still in touch with him. But I talked to her and she was 100% for it. She was totally behind it and I think even relieved by the thought.

R.M. "So you're on your way to Kansas and you leave...?"

D.M. " We leave West Virginia on the 19th (June 98) and we'll get out to Wichita on the 25th."

R.M. "How did the fact that Rich was so much in the public eye affect your grieving? Did it make it easier, harder...?"

D.M. "I would say in some ways it made it harder simply because in a lot of ways it has continued much longer. Like when my dad died, we were able to go through that process and see all those people at once and everyone had the chance to say what they had to say and with this it's just a continuing thing. It kind of holds you at the death instead of being able to celebrate his life. And you know all the memorials and tributes have all been wonderful and our family really appreciates all of it but it just kind of holds his death in front of us. In some ways it has been better because the support has been unbelievable. Robin's mom got off the Internet a lot of the letters that people wrote after Rich died and it's just been incredible. I've got 2 box's full of them. It's been overwhelming so in that respect it's been easier and it's been a good thing to have that many people praying for us and in some ways it's been a little harder because you can't get past it."

R.M. “What about the things Rich wrote before he died, like his book of prose? Will they ever be published?”

D.M. “I don’t know. There have been a lot of different ideas and it seems most people have an idea about what should be done with those things and I think as far as I’m concerned the best way to deal with those things is to let some time pass and see what’s really important and then go from there. Once we’ve been separated from his death then you can start focusing on his life again and you can say *Yeah this is really good apart from his death.*

I don’t want things to happen because he’s dead. I think the things he had to say are profound and life changing because they come from Christ and not because he’s dead. Anything he said when he was alive is just important now. For me, I’d like to just wait on making any decisions on a lot of those things. I want to be sure we do the right thing instead of jumping in there because the iron is hot and sell whatever we can sell. There is something that just feels really distasteful about that and on the other hand there’s the side that goes *‘yeah but there are people who are interested in that and is it right not to let that out?’* But, I think the people that are really interested now will be five years from now and it will be every bit as good then.”

R.M. “Was your brother about to convert to Catholicism?”

D.M. “That’s a topic of great many differing opinions. I can’t say for sure. I don’t think so. I know that he was very interested in the Catholic church,he was very interested in things that they could say about God that his upbringing and religious background had but he was that way with every group and so I think that he was very interested and he felt they had a better handle on some things than others but I don’t see it happening. I know there’s a Father in Wichita who said he was coming there and he was taking his vows and definitely doing it and I heard from others who talked to him the day before he died and he said ***No, I’m not going to do it. There are things I can’t go along with.*** And from what I know of my brother even if he would’ve done it he wouldn’t have lasted there. Sometimes the organization of the church gets put ahead of the faith of the Church and he really struggled with that.

R.M. “I know you sing and play the dulcimer too so...when is your album coming out?”

D.M. “Uh...I don’t think there will be. (Laughter) I don’t sing that well and I don’t play the dulcimer that well. What I do is just for the fun of it, just to humor myself. In fact, me and couple of guys sang at a coffee house the other night and the absolute worst song we did was Awesome God and I missed the key completely. It was really bad and my wife is sitting there dying laughing.”

R.M. “What happens 10 years from now when your 7 year old son (who also plays dulcimer) comes up to you and says he wants to be in Christian music?”

D.M. “I’d probably tell him he’s crazy. (Laughter....thinking) I guess I would support him in it. Yeah, I would. My whole insight on the Christian music business comes from Rich. I think he was able to touch and change people’s lives in a way that I never could because of what he did. I think if Jonathan were to come to me and say he wanted to do that then I would certainly support it.

The thing that scares me about the Christian music industry is the idea that if you can sing then you can make money and that just kind of bothers me. Not because I don’t think you should be able to make money or because if you’re rich or wealthy you haven’t been faithful to God. But for me that would be a difficult thing to keep weighed correctly. It would be easy to let the benefits override the reason. If Jonathan were willing to starve to do it then I would be all for him trying which is what Rich did for years he practically starved in Cincinnati and he lived in slums that mom and dad wouldn’t even go in. He even died while he was living in a hogan that didn’t even have a solid floor and he slept on a futon. I would be alright with Jonathan doing that but I’d also be ready to jerk a knot in his tail if he didn’t keep it right."

R.M. “What’s your greatest fear?”

D.M. “Probably success.”

R.M. “In what way?”

D.M. “I’ve always kind of been that way. It’s really a fear of failure but it’s a fear of success because I kind of go Wow, if you ever really succeed at anything and you do a really good job then people expect you to do that all the time. So my fear has always been doing too good a job that I can’t live up to it. I don’t want to over do because I don’t want to let people down.”

R.M. “What do you think was the biggest misconception about Rich?”

D.M. “I think he was pretty straight forward. If you knew him, we were kind of raised like - you’re just who you are and everyone has warts. Covering up and hiding them doesn’t mean they’re not there. I think now there is probably a tendency by some to make him more than he was. Which is typical anytime someone dies. The real fans knew him. Anybody who would get on stage and say what he said. There was no difference in him off stage and on. There was no great deal of difference in him from the time he was starving in Cincinnati to the time he made it big, or whatever as some people would say, in

Nashville.“

R.M. “What’s the most important thing he ever taught you?”

D.M. “He showed me a great deal about faith and just trusting in God and not being so concerned with me being in control. I like being sure I have my ducks in a row and I watched him and he never knew where he was going to be tomorrow. Somebody probably did but he had no clue what hotel he was going to be in or he never knew what money he made. He just didn’t get real concerned with the things of this earth. I think he taught me a great deal about not judging people because he is absolutely everything by appearance that I would think you stay away from. If he were hitchhiking down the road I wouldn’t pick him up. He had the long hair, a scruffy beard, always wore those worn out jeans. He’s everything your mom tells you to stay away from and then you meet him and you go “wow.” All of his friends fall into the same category pretty much. Their appearance is not what you would call a Christian appearance but they are every bit as much Christian as those of us who wear suits and ties.

R.M. “Where do you think you will be in 5 years?”

D.M. “I anticipate still being in Wichita, but I anticipated retiring in West Virginia too. In my mind it will take a couple of years to get the foundation figured out and pulled together. So I kinda figure I’ll still be in Wichita but I can see the possibility of being somewhere completely different. I’m not really too concerned either. I’ve been thinking a lot about Abraham. I don’t think God is leading me out in the wilderness to die. I think He has a plan whether the plan is what I understand it to be at this point or not. He has a plan and if I’ll just be faithful He’ll see that it comes together.

R.M. “How can people pray for you specifically?”

D.M. “I think wisdom and I think they can pray for me that....well...wisdom mainly because a lot of what we’re doing I don’t know a lot about so I’m going to need a lot of God’s wisdom and insight as to how you do what we’re trying to do and stay true to God. I think there’s a balancing act of meeting people where they are at and yet meeting them there with God.

R.M. [I turned my recorder off here. Jonathan bounded onto the deck and we discussed Star Wars and his 'girlfriend'. A dog named Maggie made herself at home under Dave's affectionate hand and somewhere in the midst of it all I turned my recorder back on...I don't remember the question...but here's the answer.]

D.M. “Rich had so many ideas for Kid Brother’s and he always had a real clear vision of where he was going and what he wanted to try to accomplish in that and his friend, Gary

was telling me he was at his house and they were talking about Kid Brother's and where he saw it going and Gary said Rich had a real clear vision up until September of last year and after that Rich had no idea. Gary said that's the only time he saw Rich like that. He had no idea, it was like there was a wall and he couldn't see.

There were so many strengths he had that I don't have, as far as the vision and creativity. He also is someone that couldn't work inside an organization. He could set it up but once it was set up he had to leave and run in his own show in the outskirts. In my mind, I wonder if God didn't create us with some of the same strengths and some of the same similarities that people notice automatically. I wonder if God created us so much alike and yet different in some ways so Rich could start this and I could work with it. It's not unlike God to start a ministry with one man and finish it with another. Look at Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha. You see God starting a work under one man and finishing it under someone else. So when it all kind of hit me that God wanted me to do this I thought of all those things. Who knows but what you come into the world for such a time as this? There are so many things you could throw off as coincidence but I look at it and think there's a line as a Christian you have to say it's not coincidence, God is moving. He is working in some really amazing ways."

For more information on The Legacy of a Kid Brother of St. Frank
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Please e-mail me, Rhonda Miskowski , with any comments or questions you have!! For more information on Rich visit **Calling Out Your Name** or mine: Rhonda's Rich Mullins Page. Thanks Danl, **RichMailList** moderator for getting the word out.

Click here to see the Mullins family on Dove night...and here to join the Ragamuffin Mail List.

Special thanks to Judy (on left) for her invaluable assistance....and to Jonathan for only making me run around the house twice to get my goodbye kiss.

Dave Mullins Interview Part II

Just added (11/98) - includes family photographs and an update on the Legacy

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Group Magazine Interview

On September 19 of last year, Christian singer/song-writer Rich Mullins died after he was thrown from his jeep on an Illinois interstates.

Mullins, who broke into Christian music when Amy Grant recorded his song "Sing Your Praise to the Lord," released 12 albums over 11 years. He was known as a Christian iconoclast - a man who soared in popularity as songs such as "Awesome God" topped the Christian music charts, but who loped around bare-footed in comfortably tattered clothing and lived in a small self-built hogan on a Navajo Indian reservation.

A short time before his death, veteran youth leader and GROUP contributor Mike Nappa talked to Mullins, a former full-time youth worker himself, about why he shunned the life of a successful musician to spend his life teaching music to Navajo teenagers.

Not long before his death in a car accident last September, Christian artist Rich Mullins talked to GROUP about his ministry passion for teenagers and the one thing they need to know

GROUP: What fueled your decision to move to the reservation?

MULLINS: Several years ago I got to go to Asia for the summer. It was a great opportunity for me to see Christianity from a non-20th-century-American slant. That experience confirmed the truth of the essence of Christianity, and it challenged my opinions about peripheral issues.

GROUP: How did you get from Asia to a Navajo reservation?

MULLINS: When I got back to the United States, I continued to think about how slanted we all view the world. This isn't to say your slant isn't a good one, but it's only one slant. Many of the experiences I had there, with people who had a different slant, really deepened and broadened and enriched my view of what God was doing here. I went, "Wow! I want to do that again! Only I want to do it in more of a concentrated effort." Here in this country, we have some 200 cultures that are not white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant-20th-century-evangelical-Christian. I came here [to the Navajo reservation] hoping to include in my vision the slant that these people have.

GROUP: What's been your most memorable moment since you moved to the reservation?

MULLINS: Probably one night down in Canyon de Chelly. I was there with some friends who had come down from Colorado Springs to visit. We were setting up camp on the rim of the canyon. This guy [a Navajo] came over and asked if we anted to come down for a cookout that evening. I was really thrilled because, unless you're a Navajo, you have to have a guide to go into the canyon. So we went, and the people who invited us down were Christians! It was kind of an amazing thing to be on the bottom of that canyon and be welcomed there. Just to sit in a little summer house, an open-air kind of thing, and hear them talking to one another in Navajo. Then this guy went out and played a flute in the bottom of the canyon. You could hear it echoing all around. It was really kind of an amazing thing.

GROUP: Speaking of amazing, your musical style seems geared for adults, yet teenagers make up a large portion of your fan base. Why do you suppose teenagers are drawn to your music?

MULLINS: I think kids today, like kids when I was growing up, want to find something. I think they're looking for the real thing.

GROUP: So you think kids are attracted by the reality your music reflects?

MULLINS: Yeah. The hilarious thing is, kids say, "You and Carman are my two favorite artists." And I go, "Wow! You've covered the span there!" I'm probably as far to the left of evangelical conservative Christianity as you can go. He's probably as far to the right as you can go without being a total loony! When you're young, you're attracted to people who are on the radical ends of the poles. When you're young, you naturally think that there are real answers and there are people who know these answers. As you get older, I think everyone gets a little more moderate about everything. Not that I don't believe there are real answers, I just think that even if we knew what they were, they wouldn't make sense to us.

GROUP: If you could give teenagers anything, what would it be?

MULLINS: Everyone gets burned. You can't go through life and not be burned. Some fires destroy us and some fires refine us. Say a guy and a girl are dating and they feel pressed to compromise their morals in the course of the date. The guy chooses to be faithful to Christ; he chooses to say, "Purity is important and I'm going to choose obedience to Christ over obedience to my instincts." His girlfriend may go, "Man, you're a wacko. Man, you're a pud." He may lose her, and that will hurt. That's going to burn. Bu that's the kind of fire that will purify him. When you compromise yourself, you're going still going to get burned because things don't generally work out all that great in life. You're still going to get burned, but at the end of that burning you'll have no integrity left, and you'll be destroyed

by that. So, I tell kids, "You're going to get burned. Always choose to be burned by that fire that refines - the fire of obedience rather than the fire of sin."

Rich Mullins on...

Kids Obeying Parents- "Kids are fooling themselves if they think they can obey God and be disobedient to their parents. They're fooling themselves if they think they can love God and not love their parents."

What Parents Can Give Kids- "The best thing parents have to offer their kids is not more religious activity, but themselves. Yes, it's good if your kid says, 'I'd rather go to [a Christian] concert than Motley Crue,' but it would be better for that kid to spend the evening at home with his parents."

Life's Realities- "When you're raised in a rationalist society, you think everything is supposed to make sense. That's just not the way life is."

Generosity- "I think that generosity is what happens naturally if you love people. I think Christ was ridiculous in his generosity. Had he not been so foolishly generous, I would be hopelessly lost."

Faith- "I think people who are genuinely joyful are people who have an unshakable faith. They're people who live in the reality of the presence of the risen Christ."

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Return to Calling Out Your Name

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Remembers Rich Mullins October 11, 1997

kidbrothers.net/rmml/rmml189.html

Date: 18 November 1997
To: RichMailList
Subject: [RichMailList 189]: 20: Countdown Tribute transcript

Hi Rich Fans,

Here is the transcription of the **20: The Countdown Magazine** tribute to Rich Mullins originally aired and simulcast to the Internet on Light 99 FM on October 11 and 12, 1997. The broadcast was available for purchase, but that availability has expired.

Special thanks to my friend Joan Slonecker for transcribing it, and to **Rick Tarrant** of **Communion Communications** for permission to post it.

(Editor's Note: The program has many excerpts from interviews with Rich along with excerpts of songs. I will put the songs in parenthesis as they are intertwined with Rich speaking.)

(Step by Step)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: (Sing Your Praise to the Lord) I really believe that we are dust. I plan on living to be 80 and I figure I'm not even half way there. People say its not fair that people should die when they are 18. I go, wow, its unfair that we should be able to live until we are that old. (Awesome God) Christ said those who worship worship in spirit and in truth. He didn't say they worship with the hair on the back of their necks raised. I think everyone will be surprised 20 years from now that Awesome God will have completely fallen out of use.

Rick Tarrant: I will not be surprised if 20 years from now to hear Awesome God being sung at our church.

Rich: Either way you go.

Rich: (Step by Step) Well, Step by Step Beaker wrote. So it is one of two songs that I have ever recorded that I didn't write and I think it was the first song that he ever wrote that he would play in front of people...(Creed) And this is what liturgy offers that all the razzmatazz of our modern worship can't touch. (My One Thing) (We Are Not As Strong As We Think We Are) I think writing-wise I am probably more of a quilter than a weaver cuz I just get a little scrap here and a little scrap there and sew them together and... (If I Stand) Those people who did the greatest things for God were the people who weren't trying to do anything at all. They were just simply being obedient.... I don't think you read the Bible to know truth. I think you read the Bible to find God. (Screen Door) A spiritual thing is folding your clothes at the end of the day. A spiritual thing is making your bed. A spiritual thing is taking cookies to your neighbor that is shut in or raking their front lawn because they are too old to do it. That is spirituality. (Let Mercy Lead) I am very hurt at the apathy in the church. I am very hurt over the determination of the government to destroy life. (Elijah) I do long for heaven. Someday God will destroy injustice. Someday there will be a judgment because we have a loving and a forgiving Father. Maybe we will survive it... I enjoy the idea of a corporate identity. When I come into church I am no longer Rich Mullins, a music education student. I am no longer Rich Mullins a guy who grew up in Indiana. I am no longer Rich Mullins a guy who has a record contract. All of a sudden I am a member of the kingdom of God. (Hold Me Jesus) Oh, my favorite hymn would be Be Thou My Vision cuz its Irish (laughs). (While the Nations Rage) (Alrightokuhhuhamen) I think my dad had that adolescent illusion that he was going to live forever. (Boy Like Me/Man Like You) I think he never really told a lot of people in his family how much he loved them because, first of all, he assumed that we knew. And second of all, I think he always assumed that there would be plenty of opportunity.

John Rivers: Today on 20: The Countdown Magazine we embark on a different journey - that of remembering truly the greatest Christian music songwriter of our age, Rich Mullins. On Saturday morning, September 20, 1997, the world awakened as usual, the sun rose, the birds sang, breakfast was prepared, newspapers thrown and read. As the weekend unfolded, the news began to spread - Rich Mullins is dead. On Sunday morning, September 21, 1997, some rose to read an obscure one inch obituary in their Sunday paper. It said, "Lostant, Illinois. AP. Rich Mullins, a best-selling contemporary Christian singer was run over and killed by a tractor trailer after being flipped out of a sports utility vehicle that went out of control. Rich Mullins, 42, died Friday night after he and his drummer, Mitchell McVicker were driving southbound on Interstate 39 near Lostant, Illinois, said Sheriff Sergeant Greg Jacobsen. It was unclear who was driving. Mullins of Bonito, New Mexico was perhaps best known for his song, Our God is an Awesome God."

(Awesome God)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins

John Rivers: One of the people who had the privilege of spending some time with Rich Mullins was 20: The Countdown Magazine's producer Rick Tarrant.

Rich: In terms of the scope of eternity, I really believe that we are dust. I really believe that I will someday be dead no matter how good my songs are. Someday I will decay. I will rot and there will be nothing left.

Rick Tarrant: An old recording of Our God is an Awesome God

Rich: Because I write pop music, it is all very disposable. I think everyone would be surprised twenty years from now that that song will have completely fallen out of use.

Rick Tarrant: I would not be surprised if twenty years from now to hear Awesome God sung in our church.

Rich: Either way you go. In terms of eternity, those people who did the greatest things for God were the people who weren't trying to do anything at all. They were just simply being obedient

Rick Tarrant: Those are the people God can use.

Rich. Those are the people God can use. And I want to be one of them. If God should use me, that would be great but if He doesn't there is a very interesting thing you can do. In the gospel of Mark or in any of the four gospels, you go through the gospels and you say, what people are absolutely essential to this story? So Mary is essential to the story because Mary had to give birth to Jesus. And you could say, well someone else could have. But lets say that if she wouldn't have done it then the story wouldn't have happened. So, you have God who chose to become flesh, you have Mary who gave Him flesh, you have Jesus who was God in the flesh or who was the child of Mary and God, you have Pontius Pilate who had, in an artificial sense, the power to kill Christ, you have Judas Iscariot who betrayed Christ and handed him over to the bad guys, you have whoever it was that nailed Him up to the cross. Out of those people that God used to accomplish His will in the gospel, only a couple of them were very nice people. Most of them were bad people. We all want to be useful to God. Well, its no big deal. God can use anybody. God used Nebuchadnezzar. God used Judas Iscariot. Its not a big deal to be used by God and the shocking thing in the book of Mark, and the reason why it is so shocking is because Mark is the briefest of all the gospels but he has these terrific little details and one of the little details is that it says, "and Jesus called to Him those that He wanted." And you

realize that out of the twelve people that He wanted, only one was essential to His goal in coming to earth. The other eleven people were useless to Christ but they were wanted by Christ. And I kind of go, I would much rather have God want me than have God use me.

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins

(Hold Me Jesus)

John Rivers: You're listening to a very special broadcast of 20: The Countdown Magazine as we endeavor to pay tribute to a man we can never really repay, Rich Mullins.

(break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. I'm John Rivers. We are foregoing our normal programming to honor the heart and life of a very very dear and special friend, Rich Mullins.

Rick Tarrant: What do you hope to accomplish when you do an album after you have gone to all the effort of recording and overdubbing and vocals and bringing in other people? What is the end of it?

Rich: The end is that God made man. He created him in His own image. He created him out of dust. He breathed into him the breath of life. Man became a living soul. He gave man sexuality. He created them male and female. And he gave man work. And I am just doing my work. I am not trying to write great albums. I'm not trying to write great songs. I'm not trying to do any of that. What I'm trying to do is be faithful. If I were a plumber, most plumbers don't say, "Man I'm going to come up with the most original arrangement of pipes here." But when you flush your toilet, if things go the way they should go, you are very thankful that the plumber was doing their job.

Rick Tarrant: This is true.

Rich: But I think that part of our identity as human beings is that we have work, that we have things to do. And I am gifted as a musician. I am gifted as a writer and so I have to do that out of obedience. I am not gifted as a singer. I have a weird voice. I have a terrible speaking voice and when I sing its not as weird as when I talk so I should probably sing more and talk less. But, nevertheless, I don't like my voice even when I am singing and people say, "Why do you sing then?" and I go, "Because it is the most reiterated command in the whole Bible." And I figure there must be a reason why it says over and over and over, sing sing sing sing sing. I also kind of go, this is a lot easier than loving my enemies so maybe I should start with the easy stuff and maybe by the time I am really old I will have been able to tie the more complicated knot.

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

(Sing Your Praise to the Lord)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. I am John Rivers. Rich's walk with Christ was highly influenced by a book by Brennan Manning entitled The Ragamuffin Gospel. And in that book Mr. Manning wrote, among other things, "The Ragamuffin Gospel reveals that Jesus forgives sins including sins of the flesh, that He is comfortable with sinners who remember how to show compassion, but that He cannot and will not have a relationship with pretenders in the Spirit." Rich Mullins was certainly no pretender. He was the real deal.

Rich Mullins: The preaching of Brennan Manning - we practice silence in the truck a lot of times so we hardly ever have a tape on or anything like that. But we don't have any rules - you can do what you want. But Beaker put in a Brennan Manning tape and I really didn't want to hear it because I didn't know who he was and don't ordinarily like preaching. I went "Argh, great." Well, I think about five minutes into it I think I had to pull off the road because I was just bawling my eyes out. I thought, what I am experiencing here is that I have gone to church ever since I was wee little, probably from when I was a week old, and this is the first sermon in my memory that is the preaching of the Good News of the Gospel of Christ. He's not preaching about an issue. He's not preaching about a theological position. He's not preaching about anything except this is the Good News. And I thought, wow, this is what I am hungry to hear. This is what I am dying to hear.

(Let Mercy Lead)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: People say "Why do you write music?" and I always say "Well, how many of Wesley's sermons do you know?" And I've talked to a lot of good Methodists and they don't know any of them. Then I say, "Well, how many of Wesley's hymns do you know?" and most church goers know at least a good solid dozen hymns that Wesley wrote. Most pagans know at least a couple. And I kind of go, that is why I write music and not sermons.

John Rivers: This is John Rivers. Our tribute to Rich Mullins will continue in a moment on 20: The Countdown Magazine.

(Break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. I'm John Rivers. The one thing that was central to all Rich said and all that Rich did was that we must die to our

own self wills and our own selfishness and let Jesus' life replace our own.

Rich: The hardest part of being a Christian is surrendering and that is where the real struggle happens. Once we have overcome our own desire to be elevated, our own desire to be recognized, our own desire to be independent and all those things that we value very much because we are Americans and we are part of this American culture. Once we have overcome that struggle then God can use us as a part of His body to accomplish what the body of Christ was left here to accomplish.

(Sometimes by Step)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: My twenties were very very disturbed years because it was the time of the real battle between my will to submit my will and my will to assert my will. I wanted to love God and at the same time I resented God for being who He is because if He was God then I couldn't be. And I would flip-flop back and forth between saying thank you God that you are the Lord and that I am not because even I am a rotten steward I would be a terrible Lord. I would flip-flop between saying that and saying yeah but we are going to do this my way right now. So I do love you but I'm going to go my way and so blink for a long time. You know, by the time you've gone through that long enough after you have beaten your head up against that wall for a good decade, you come out of it and you have accomplished all of the damage that God wanted to save you from. All you can do at that point is go, "Wow! I am so sorry that when You told me to walk in faith, I refused to do it. And now I know why You gave the commands that You gave. Now I know why You say what You say. And I wish that I didn't have to know that in order to obey it."

(Growing Young)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins

Rich: Yeah and especially in a day when so much emphasis and so much pressure is put on us to esteem ourselves I kind of go, wow, I don't know how anyone can wake up with morning breath and pillow head and feel any self esteem. (laughing) That is not the sort of thing I want to put my faith in. And in the church it is unbelievable to me that this whole foolishness about esteeming yourself has leaked into the church. I kind of go, "Christ didn't ask us to esteem ourselves." I think if Christ were asked, I think He would probably say, "Look buddy, you would be lucky if you could forget yourself. If you could lose yourself, you would be luckier than if you found yourself." It would be wonderful if you knew the names of the trees between your house and where you work, between your house and your church. If you knew that that was a tulip tree and you knew that that was

a red bud. It would be great if you knew the names of the constellations. It would be great if you knew something about your neighbor. It would be a lucky thing for you if you forgot yourself, if you lost yourself. I remember when my brother and his fiancŽ were eating a meal with us and it was absolutely sickening because we were trying to eat here and they were staring at each other in the eyes and I'm going, "Golly, can you not wait until football." And then I realized, wow, what a terrific thing when you are so in love that you forget how obnoxious love looks to everybody else. (Rick laughing in background). How I wish we were all French. Although I really appreciate modesty and I detest public displays but nevertheless, what a wonderful thing when you are so caught up in a moment when you are so lost in an experience that you forget to straighten your tie or to comb your hair. Why esteem yourself? Forget yourself. You'll have a lot more fun.

John Rivers: This is John Rivers. A tribute to Rich Mullins will continue in a moment on 20: The Countdown Magazine.

(break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. (78 Eatonwood Green) Rich loved God's word. He once wrote, "The Bible is not a book for the faint of heart. It is a book full of all the greed and glory and violence and tenderness and sex and betrayal that benefits mankind. It is not the collection of pretty little anecdotes mouthed by pious little church mice. It does not so much nibble at our shoe as it cuts to the heart and splits the marrow from bone to bone. It does not give us answers fitted to our smaller minded questions but truth that goes beyond what we even know to ask."

Rich: I don't think you read the Bible to know truth. I think you read the Bible to find God, that we encounter Him there. Paul says that the scriptures are God's breath and I kind of go, wow, so let's breathe this as deeply as possible. And this is what liturgy offers that all the razzmatazz of our modern worship can't touch. You don't go home from church going, "Oh I am just moved to tears." You go home from church going, "Wow, I just took communion and you know what? If Augustine were alive today, he would have had it with me and maybe he is and maybe he did."

(Creed)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remember Rich Mullins.

Rich: A lot of times we think something spiritual is happening and it is merely aesthetics. That is why it always bugs me at the end of a concert someone will say, "Wow the Spirit really worked" and I kind of go, "How would you even be able to know that? It was so noisy in here tonight. How would you know if the Spirit was working?" "Well, I was really

moved." Well, that is an emotional thing. That's not a spiritual thing. A spiritual thing is folding your clothes at the end of the day. A spiritual thing is making your bed. A spiritual thing is taking cookies to your neighbor that is shut in or raking their front lawn because they are too old to do it. That's spirituality. Getting a warm, oozy feeling about God is an emotional thing. There is nothing wrong with it. I think there is nothing more practical than real spirituality. But nothing more fun than just a good heartfelt emotional experience of God because I think emotions are good. They are only dangerous when we come away from an experience where we were emotionally manipulated and we confuse that with being convicted. I think conviction - there is an emotion that accompanies that but it certainly goes deeper than just coming away going, "Oh isn't God neat? Two different worlds."

(Calling Out Your Name)

Rich: The first line of that I wrote when I was on tour with Amy Grant on the Unguarded tour I think or whatever tour that was. That was years and years ago.

Rick Tarrant: That long ago, yeah.

Rich: We were driving through Nebraska and there was a big beautiful full moon and I don't know how it happens but I just thought well, the moon moved past Nebraska and spoke laughter on those cold Dakota hills. Buffalo Bill. (laughs) That was where it started. I went, "Oh I will use that someday. I have no idea where but I know I will use it." And so I just kind of stored it away. Then I was riding my motorcycle in the Flint Hills and pretty much finished the song there. This would have been six years later that I finished it. But I do that. I keep little scraps. I think writing-wise, I am probably more of a quilter than a weaver cuz I just get a little scrap here and a little scrap there and sew them together and...

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins will continue in a moment

(break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

(First Family)

Rich: I am very very fortunate that I come from a family that is real family oriented and our extended family is. You know, when I was growing up I had uncles and aunts.... my uncle Loren brought dilly bars every Friday night up to the house. And my great grandma would read to me and tell me stories every afternoon for my nap. If my mom had to go to town, I

had aunts and uncles everywhere I could stay with. And they all lived within a few yards of each other. What I discovered is heritage doesn't puff you up with pride. It really humbles you. If you look at the lives of the people you have come from and you kind of go, if they had married anyone else, if they had moved anywhere else, if their lives had been one iota different, you wouldn't be here. And so you have not a big debt, not a crushing debt to pay, but you are part of an ongoing thing. You are not alone in the world. You are part of an ensemble.

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: Its like my dad who died when he was 60. He died good. He had a stroke and was gone instantly.

Rick Tarrant: Wow. That's a good way to die.

Rich: Yeah. And the cool thing is that he was out working in the nursery. He was digging a tree and my mom was right by him. And you know my mom and he had been married for forty something years and he loved working so the last thing he saw in this life was the woman he loved and the last thing he did in this life was dig a tree and who knows what he saw on the other side. I think my dad had that adolescent illusion that he was going to live forever and that he was invincible and that nothing bad was ever going to happen to him. And because of that, I think he was a little reckless, not in terms of ...because I appreciate and enjoy my dad's recklessness in terms of , he would do anything, anytime, anywhere. But I think he was a little negligent in terms of ...I think he never really told a lot of people in his family how much he loved them because, first of all he assumed that we knew. And second of all I think he always assumed that there would be plenty of opportunity. In the last three or four years of his life, after he realized that he was mortal, he was a very very changed man and the relationship was completely restored in that amount of time. Looking at that, I kind of go, boy God is a good God. He will complete our lives. He will impute His holiness onto us. And I think part of holiness is having right relationships with other people.

(Boy Like Me/Man Like You)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins

Rich Mullins: One song that is likely to be released is a song called Boy Like Me/Man Like You and we wrote that in Illinois. This guy came and was telling me that they had used Awesome God on this picket line and I was hoping it was like a rescue mission or something like that and he said no, we were picketing the movie The Last Temptation of Christ. And I said "Oh (and I'm not as dumb as I act sometimes - I played stupid) Why

were you picketing that movie?" And he said, "Why haven't you heard? This is a terrible movie. It portrays Christ as being a man." I said, "Wow that is really weird because I thought that was the Good News was that God had become a man." And I realized that the movie probably failed. I didn't see it myself so I can't say. But I understand the movie failed to portray Christ as being divine as well as being a man. So, after that, Beaker and I started talking about the whole mystery of the incarnation, ooooooohhhhh big heavy theological thinking. But what it all comes down to is, what would it be like to be God almighty and to inspire those phophets to write all those great books and Moses to write those books and then to have to become a little boy and endure Hebrew school and listen to some rabbi rattle on about something that you wrote before he was ever born? What would it be like to be Christ? I mean, did He ever play ball? Did they ever knock a window out of somebody's house and did He ever have to explain to His dad that He had to borrow $12.00? So, we just started talking about what a weird thing it would be to be God and then to become flesh and then we also went on and just talked about what a weird thing to be nothing and then to become flesh. That at one time we were nothing and then we got here. And wasn't it great and aren't you glad that you were born? And isn't life full of a lot of loneliness and misery and all those things but who wants to give it up? Nobody! Its a wonderful thing. Isn't it great to have legs?

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. More conversations with Rich when we return.

(break)

John Rivers: Thank you for allowing us to bring you this special edition of 20: The Countdown Magazine as we remember Rich Mullins.

(Hello Old Friends)

John Rivers: Rich Mullins

Rich: I am a very very blessed person in terms of friends. What I look for in a friendship is someone who will beat you up. You get in a big fight with them and then the winner rides the other guy home on the bike. One of the things I appreciate about traveling with Beaker is that he just really doesn't cut me a lot of slack because I can be a real whiner and a real complainer. Ohhhh nooooo, you gotta..... He just goes, "Well don't then. If you don't want to do it don't but don't gripe about it . If you're going to do it be glad you get to do it." So its kind of cool because friendship is a very big deal to me.

(What Susan Said)

Rick Tarrant: Are you married?

Rich: No

Rick Tarrant: Do you want to be?

Rich: Someday. Why? Are you proposing? (laughing all around)

Rick Tarrant: Strike this (still laughing).

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: I would always be frustrated with all those relationships even when I was engaged. I had a ten year thing with this girl and I would often wonder why, even in those most intimate moments of our relationship, I would still feel really lonely. And it was just a few years ago that I finally realized that friendship is not a remedy for loneliness. Loneliness is a part of our experience and if we are looking for relief from loneliness in friendship, we are only going to frustrate the friendship. Friendship, camaraderie, intimacy, all those things, and loneliness live together in the same experience.

Rick Tarrant: We always think about you being the...

Rich: the happy celibate

Rick Tarrant: The happy celibate, yeah.

Sherry Rivers, (John's wife): The quintessential bachelor who is not looking

Rich: Well I think I am that now and you know a lot of people really don't get it but I kind of go, you know what? I'm not a real..... I don't know. I have no interest in anybody else and she is married to someone else so that's the way it goes and I don't mind that. Right now I cannot imagine that life could be happier married than it is single so I'm not in a panic about getting married. And I think, you know, maybe God wanted me to be celibate and the way that he accomplished that was to break my heart. So that's the way it goes.

(The River)

Rich: When I wrote Doubly Good For You, we were getting married, and I had written that for our wedding. A friend of mine said, "Boy that is a really cruel song." And I said, "Well, why?" and she said, "Because you are inferring that if God doesn't give you a love that is centered around someone that is true that he hasn't been doubly good to you. I'm like, "Well, exactly." But God doesn't have to be singly good to anybody. We all have got it better than we deserve so we should be thankful for what we have.

John Rivers: You are listening to a very special broadcast of 20: The Countdown Magazine as we endeavor to pay tribute to a man we can never really repay, Rich Mullins.

(break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. The Monday morning after losing Rich, I received a fax from another friend, a friend of Rich's in fact, Billy Crockett. I think it only appropriate that we share that with you. "Sunday, September 21, 1997 I found out last night that Rich Mullins was killed in a car crash. This is hard to swallow for anybody who knew him or his songs much at all. Rich's quirky life got inside us. His worked moved and disturbed us in its relentless homage to the truth of Christ. So full of whimsy the sound of the eternal ringing in his ears, Rich was famous for being clueless and profound at the same time. He was both an eccentric stranger and a friend to me. I played and sang on his albums. We did concerts together. Being part of his music is one of the cherished hallmarks of my life. I suppose its not real surprising that his life ended abruptly. He did seem to live like a meteorite. The reckless raging fury of God's love is what he was on to. I simply hoped for more chapters, more chances, more strange improvisational occasions to play for and glimpse the wild heart of a true believer. So good-bye Rich. Go headlong into the mystery of God. I am grateful to have lived during your lifetime. Billy" From Billy Crockett.

(Bound to Come Some Trouble)

Rich: God is a good God. He will complete our lives. He will impute his holiness onto us. The wonderful thing about God is that I deeply feel that once we come into the covenant through Jesus, once we have come through the way with him, that God really sees Christ when he looks at us and the sin in our life really is buried with Christ. And when God looks on us he sees what Christ has imputed onto us. And the work of the Spirit is just to get us to catch up with what has already happened.

(My One Thing)

John Rivers: Incomparable words from Rich Mullins. The reckless raging fury that is the love of God. 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins will continue in a moment.

Rich: From when I was real little, I heard stories about people from Holland, people from Ireland, people from France, wherever our family came from. My grandma was an orphan. My grandpa ended up, being, unfortunately, an elected official but none of us held that against him too long.

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine Remembers Rich Mullins

(Here in America)

Rich: I think the big problem is that, as Christians, we forgot that our identity is wrapped up in Christ and for a long time we bought into the illusion that the will of the masses would be more generous and more benevolent than the will of one dictator. But democracy isn't necessarily bad politics, its just bad math. A thousand corrupt minds are just as evil as one corrupt mind.

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins.

Rich: I'm very hurt at the apathy in the church. I'm very hurt over the determination of the government to destroy life and its not simply over the abortion issue. Anyone who has any awareness at all of Wounded Knee, not only the first Wounded Knee but what happened there, what 20 years ago, whatever. You kinda go, there can be no doubt that governments that are controlled by men are without exception anti-life and anti-Christ.

(The Just Shall Live)

Rich: I think for a long time I believed that there would be political solutions because, growing up in America, you endure several political campaigns and these people make promises and they say, we will do this and we will do that and you believe them because you don't know any better. And I really believed for a long time that this was all going to work. And I thank God now for Richard Nixon and for Gerald Ford and for all those people who betrayed any confidence that the American people could have in their government who said that the leadership of this country is not accountable to the people who elect them and who made so clear what we now know that no government works. And I wanted the government to work. And what I have now realized is I used to make fun of the sentimental feeling of the church that there was an afterlife. I used to mock songs about Heaven. And I used to think that it was somehow stupid and even wicked to dream of Heaven and to long for Heaven. And now I see the kind of a horrible place earth really is. And I go hiking and I go, this could be so beautiful. I met the guy last night sweeping the stairs down there and I talked to this very gentle man, a very kind man, a very simple man and I thought, how could a world made up of people like this be such a horrible place. And then I pick up the paper and read about dishonesty and deceit and betrayal and all that and go, I do long for Heaven. Someday God will destroy injustice. Someday there will be a judgment and because we have a loving and a forgiving Father, maybe we'll survive it. If we don't, sometimes I think hell is better than what we deserve anyway.

John Rivers: This is John Rivers. Our tribute to Rich Mullins will continue in just a moment

on 20: The Countdown Magazine.

(break)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers Rich Mullins. I'm your host John Rivers. In the summer of 1996, Reunion Records released a wonderful collection from Rich Mullins, kind of a best of collection simply entitled Songs. We thought it was simply the end of a chapter in Rich's life. We didn't realize it was the end of the book. Of all the songs that he had written, Rich said his favorite was Elijah. He recorded it on his first album. He rerecorded it for his final album. When asked why he redid it, he simply said, "Because nobody listened the first time." We're listening now Rich.

(Elijah)

John Rivers: 20: The Countdown Magazine remembers our friend Rich Mullins. I'm John Rivers. I remember when I first met Rich standing against a lightpost or a lamppost, whatever it was, outside of some really beautiful hotel in Nashville, Tennessee in our big convention in the spring back in the 80's when he wasn't too famous yet but just famous enough to be brought to Nashville. And showing off was something he felt really uncomfortable with. He was dressed typically Rich - he may have even been barefooted, can't remember. Unpretentious, maybe a service station Dickies shirt on and trousers. Kathy Sprinkle, a dear friend, was with him at the time. Had a burr haircut. I already loved his music and I thought I recognized him so I said, "Rich!" He said, "Yes." "John Rivers," I introduced myself and asked if I could buy his lunch and he said, "Yeah, love it, kinda hungry anyway" so we go in this fancy hotel, this ritzy restaurant where he probably felt a little uncomfortable. It wasn't Rich's kind of place. We sat down to lunch, one of those places where the entree is $19.95 you know and started eating. Rich looked at me and said, "Have you read Tozer? heheheh Chesterton? I said, "No" and he says, "Well you can't be a Christian." Kidding of course. Later, throughout the years he would send me various books by his favorite authors. He talked to me about Brennan Manning, Tozer, G.K. Chesterton. In fact he sent me The Romance of Faith, Orthodoxy, by G.K Chesterton circa 1900 as I recall. On the inside front cover he wrote me a note saying, "Man here is the book I promised ya. If you have already bought it, please throw that one away and keep this one. It'll make me feel better." Then he referred me to the pages that were maybe most important to him. Who can forget, maybe at that same big convention, at that gigantic dinner we used to have after the Dove Awards. They had every unimaginable food and everyone was dressed to the nines and Rich Mullins was there and he felt so uncomfortable in that rich setting so to speak. I'm going along the dessert line and I see, I think, a guy who is Rich Mullins, who has relieved one of the servers and has now donned their white jacket and their little white chefs hat or whatever it was and is serving desserts to all these people after the Dove awards. I think most of them didn't even know it was

him. But that was Rich Mullins. He'd rather be behind the counter serving than out with the folks in their fancy duds. Rich Mullins was the real thing. Rich Mullins loved Jesus. I loved him and still do.

(If I Stand)

The End

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Round Table Discussion at Cornerstone '97

kidbrothers.net/interviews/cornerstone.html

From a round table discussion at Cornerstone 97 on the topic of "Contemporary Christian music,: Is it Contemporary or Christian" sponsored by Prism magazine. The basic concept was: is CCM a bunch of garbage. Is it even contemporary or Christian... and what are the implications for us if it is or isn't.

After being in the industry for a long, long time I've been called on to make a lot of compromises. And for me, it's not so much a question of "Is it Christian or is it not?", but it's the question of "Is there integrity in what you're doing?", because I think music is Christian. It may be corrupted, but if we're created in the image of a creative God, this instinct that we have to create... You know, I don't know how you'd evaluate what someone makes. And I know I don't understand a lot of what you guys [the audience] listen to. I'm just not young enough anymore, and that doesn't mean that it's not good. I think every generation has to draw from itself it's own expression of whatever is there. And I think once you get my age you just have bow out and go, "I'm just not angry enough to do this song anymore." But I once was, and it sounds tame compared to what you guys are doing. But believe me, we were mad as hell.

So I think creativity is a very Christian thing. I think that, at least Christians, have a very distinct understanding that if we are created in the image of God that means we're going to have an impulse, or whatever you want to call that, to create. And so, you kinda go, "When people are creative on whatever level, there's something Godly about that. Even if it is corrupted and sick; like there's something Godly about us even though we're corrupted and sick." So the question 'Is contemporary Christian music either Contemporary or Christian?.' I kinda go, "Well, it's happening now, so that's contemporary" (I mean, I don't know how you can be any more contemporary than that).

The question about 'Is it Christian', I think the real question that we all want to discuss is 'Is there integrity in what we're doing?' And boy, that's a call I don't know who could make. But I do want to say, because I'm assuming that most of you are contemporary Christian music fans, if you really want Christianity, you won't find it in- there are a million great books out there, there are a million great records. If you're really interested in Christianity go to church, and commit yourself to being obedient to the gospels. I mean, that's where it really happens. That's why it's always such a hack off to me when people talk about my ministry. I tend to think my ministry is to clean up my hotel room before I leave. My ministry is to leave a generous tip for a waitress who's having a really lousy day and who's had a bad attitude when waiting on me. My ministry is to not tailgate people who are

driving like idiots in front of me. If you're a Christian, ministry is just an accident of being alive...of being Christian. It just happens. And I don't know that you can divide your life up and say, 'This is my ministry' and 'This is my other thing,' because the fruits of Christianity affect everybody around us.

So is contemporary Christian music Christian? I don't suppose it's any more Christian that anything else is. I think that people are Christian, and things are neither this nor that. It's kinda...sure, ...but maybe not. I don't know how you would baptize an industry. Hopefully with fire. .....

Look, here's the deal folks: this discussion is that kind of a thing where you go, "I wish that people who were making records would resume the attitude of 'We're in this to make money. We're not in this to be prophetic.'" Let pastors be prophetic. Let churches be prophetic. I don't think it's the Vigilantes of Love's job to stretch my imagination about sex. And I like those guys a lot, and I have no objection to Love Cocoon, or whatever. But I don't understand why artists have to be the moral conscience of the world. Most of us don't know anything about anything. We don't have enough sense to have a moral conscience for ourselves. We shouldn't be responsible for stretching the boundaries, for pushing the church into a new direction. That is a church matter, you know. What I mean is I think an artist's obligation is to honestly, as honestly as possible to reach into themselves and pull out whatever is there that is human that people can relate to, and set it out. And if people want to buy it, then buy it! If people don't want to buy it, then don't buy it. But I, as an artist, have no right to criticize you because you don't happen to like what I have found that is human in me. Does that make sense? .....

What I'm saying - Oh! What I was gonna say a long time ago - (laughing)... It is a dangerous thing to give me a microphone... I read this great thing in a collection I carry around with me, all this multi-cultural reading stuff you're supposed to do - and this guy talked about Elvis. And he talked about the problem with white middle class culture, and his thing is - and I think he's wrong - is that we really don't have a culture, we have products. And he said, here's an example: Elvis would go in Mississippi and he would listen to the music of the black community and he would go, "WOW! I love this stuff - it's really cool." And then someone said "If we clean it up a little bit, if we sanitize it, then we could possibly sell it to white people with money." And so Elvis took a cultural expression that came out of the black culture, what was integrally a part of it, was organic there, he took it and cleaned it up and here it is, a product that was removed from the culture. And they made it marketable to people who had no understanding or appreciation for what that music is really about. And then everybody thought that Pat Boone came along and said "Well...Elvis kinda cleaned it up a little, but if I really clean it up, if I castrate this stuff, I can sell a lot of it." And he made it very marketable as well. So, what we have here is: pop

music is an illusion of an imitation of something. You know what I mean? And it's disconnected from anything really human.

I think in the church one of the ways the American church, like every church for every culture, really runs at risk is when we begin to read the Bible purely from our own cultural bias, and we don't realize that there's something here more than when we're not suspect of ourselves. And I think that a lot of it is the horror of hearing people talk about America being a Christian nation. Or an industry being a Christian industry. You go, "That's impossible".

I think that the problem with the American church is the same problem with the English church. Except that our problem is that we're American and their problem is that they're English. The same problem with the Chinese church, only our problem is that we're American and their problem is that they're Chinese. Does that make sense?

And one of the distinct things about the American culture is that we're product oriented. Most people I know would rather watch a movie about riding a horse than go ride a horse. Most people I know would rather (with all of this "Virtuous Reality" or whatever that is) seek out the sensation of something, than seek out the thing itself. That's why pornography is very popular in our culture, because you get all of the, most of the, thrill of sex without actually having to touch anybody. And it's absolutely safe. That's why soap operas are so popular. They're the female equivalent of pornography. They get all the feelings, they get to be stirred up and disturbed and emotionally traumatized and never have to be around a man to do it. And the church has adopted that very thing.

We can saturate ourselves - this is the disturbing thing for me. When you're trying to have communion in a church and the organist is playing some horrible piece, and you think, "Geesh - I'm trying to think about the body and blood of Jesus and you're playing this discordant stuff. How am I supposed to meditate here when you're directing every thought, when you're occupying too big a spot in my head?" So you have to let the communion plate pass because you can't possibly eat it without taking damnation into yourself.

We love the sensation of Christianity and the sensation of spirituality- we like the illusion of it, but we don't want the reality of it. The reality of it would be way too glorious and too boring for any of us to handle. And that's why we have, as Americans, this wonderful thing that we can buy, this illusion. As long as you recognize that it's an illusion it's perfectly fine, it's perfectly safe. It's when we begin to believe that this is the reality of the thing that we run into trouble. And so we go (oh yeah, I get this all the time) "I'm so glad you came because I'm in such a spiritual low. It's been three months since our last Christian concert and I'm just starving spiritually." And I go, "Well babe, you're starving worse now than

ever, because you just got a lot of candy. That's all can give you. If you really want spiritual sustenance, go to church. Lock yourself into something that is more eternal than your little MTV generation head can handle."

You don't have to be constantly thrilled. On the other hand, there's nothing wrong with going to a concert and having a great time, as long as you realize that what I'm doing here is a lot of fun. It's not particularly spiritual. It's no more spiritual than making my bed- it's just a lot more fun. And so I think, to answer your question about this cultural sub, sub what? [aside to other panel members](I don't even know half of the words you guys are using.) But our sub-cultural thing... yes, I think it's polluted. It's No more polluted than it would be if we were all from Afghanistan and we were all sitting around a tent talking about problems in contemporary Christianity in that culture. Everybody's got problems with their culture and Christianity because Christianity is not a good mixer, it's a solo thing. .....

(To a question from the audience along the lines of "But don't you think that there are some musicians out there that are prophetic and that is expressed in their music?")

I think if a person speaks sincerely, if the person has the Holy Spirit in them, if they're filled with the Spirit and they speak honestly- then it is very possible that that can become prophetic. I know I was living with this couple when I lived in Wichita and they had a little boy. And I was sitting on the couch one day and Jacob did this thing that I loved to see, he won't do it anymore because he's too old. He used to throw himself down on the floor and he would bang his head on the floor. I loved that. {Laughing} And I would always have to go out on the porch because I would laugh and that would blow the whole thing. But Megan, his mother, one day he threw himself on the floor and was beating his head on the floor, and she stepped over him and walked into the kitchen. Man, it killed me. I didn't laugh this time. I had to leave because I was, I was crying.

And I realized, "Man, this is prophetic. Jacob is me. I'm always throwing myself on the floor and beating my head on the floor going 'God, if You don't give me what I want right now, I'm going to hurt Your image. I'm going to destroy the closest thing I have to You, which is me. It's a long way away, but it's still the closest thing we got.'" God is not going to answer my prayer when I come to Him in a demanding way. God's not gonna pay any attention to me at all, I can beat my head until it bleeds. He can't honor that, cause He is a good father. He has to discipline you by saying , "Hey- I'm going to just be quiet here. I'm gonna go in the kitchen and make a pound cake." So I think all kinds of things in life are prophetic, and I don't think we should exclude Christian music from that just because it's crummy... I guess that's the idea I'm getting here. And watch out what you say about radio...they play my songs all the time.!

Return to Calling Out Your Name

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WETN Interview

Artie Terry

April 17, 1997

Announcer: Hello! And welcome to another special edition of The Exchange, hosted by Wheaton College Professor of Communications, Artie Terry. Today's guest on The Exchange is writer, recording artist and performer, Rich Mullins. Before we get to the interview and live performance, here is Rich Mullins with "Hope To Carry On", from his album, Never Picture Perfect.

[Hope To Carry On]

AT: Hi! Welcome to the show, The Exchange. I'm Artie Terry. Today my guest is Rich Mullins, singer, songwriter, performer. Rich, welcome! Good to see you!

RM: How are you?

AT: I'm ok! Thanks for coming down. I know you have, like, a bunch of stuff to do, and you're busy and all that kind of stuff, and... it's good to see you.

RM: It's good to see you.

AT: I have so many questions... they're gonna let us talk for awhile, and then also you're gonna do some music. Is that right?

RM: Ok!

AT: Cool!

RM: (laughs) You tell me what's all right!

AT: You're doing music! The first thing I want to do is ask you about music in general, and how did you gravitate, or, how did you become involved in music?

RM: Much against my parents' wishes! (laughs)

AT: To be sure!

RM: Because, I just, from when I was real little, I always liked music. My great-grandparents lived right next door to us and I would... they had a piano, and I would go over all the time and play. I think my dad didn't want me to get involved in it totally because he wanted me to be a jock. And, like, there was just no way that was gonna happen. So I think he finally just gave up.

AT: (laughs)

RM: Then, when I didn't get a good... in elementary school, when everybody else did, he let me take piano lessons as a consolation prize. And actually the consolation prize turned out better than the grand prize.

AT: Let me ask you this. When you look back, and you think about the things that attracted you at the earliest, what were the things you heard that made you -

RM: Hymns.

AT: Was it hymns?

RM: Yeah. I think, I guess, yeah, hymns would be when I was real little. Because I don't remember my parents even listening to a lot of music. I mean, I don't remember the radio being on. I think my sisters had a little record player, but this was back in the late Fifties, and if we wanted to hear music we would all go up to my cousins'. And at their house they had records and stuff. And we'd go up there. But I don't think I paid a lot of attention to pop music until the

Beatles came out.

AT: Let me go on. If you were to... the Beatles. We could do a whole hour on the Beatles. Let me ask you about that, the Beatles.

RM: Um hum...

AT: What song was it, I'm sure it's - I know what song it was for me, what song made me 'click.' What was the song, what made you hear, that made you want to go...

RM: It was the Ed Sullivan show, and I remember we were watching it, and my parents were really disgusted, and I didn't know why. But I pretended to be disgusted, just because I didn't want to get sent to bed. I'm sitting there pretending to be really disgusted, and I'm going, "Gosh, I would give anything to do that." And I don't know what it was. It was a... see, I was right there when everything was happening, but I was just a little too young to understand it. But something happened.

AT: You know, I know, it's hard, because that's similar to my own experience. The girl who lived next door to me, I grew up with, had, she had a copy of "I Want To Hold Your Hand" And the Saturday night before they were on Ed Sullivan, we went over to visit. Our families were really close and she takes me upstairs so we can listen to a few records and stuff. She was playing this one record over and over, and I didn't get it. I'm like, "What? Why are you doing this?" And then, the next night was the night they were on Ed Sullivan. And it was like, "Oh, I get it!" And it was so obvious... I think a lot of people in our own generation, that when that happened, like, it changed stuff.

RM: But what I wonder is... you know, I grew up in rural Indiana, and I wonder if that was the first time when I realized that I, as a guy, could be cool.

AT: That's interesting.

RM: That guys could do something besides raise hogs.

[performance of "If I Stand"]

AT: I have a quote here, from an interview, about music, and I'll read this verbatim from this interview. It says, and I quote: "'The thing that's cool about music is how unnecessary it is,' Rich says with characteristic candor. [Rich chuckles] 'Of all things music is the most frivolous and the most useless. You can't eat it, you can't drive it, you can't live in it, you can't wear it. But your life wouldn't be worth much without it.'" How did you arrive at that conclusion?

RM: (sighs) I think that comes from growing up in rural Indiana! (laughter) You know, you grow up, I mean... and that's the thing I love about Mid-westerners is, they're very practical people. And they... for a farmer, especially for a small farmer like my dad, everything had a use, everything had multiple uses. He figured out... he could just about do anything with any tool. And you get that kind of mindset, and the thing about music is that, it really is something that there's no... it's part of what I think is great about being human, is, you can't really explain what that is.

AT: When you got to the point where this music thing started to work - ok, I'm sure your family always had, you know you said your dad wanted you to be a jock and everything, you're trying to, "I know the direction I want to go in" - what was it like, to the point, was it a point where they finally realized, "Hey, you know, he's got something here, and this is gonna work for him," what was that like?

RM: Well even... (laughs)

AT: That hasn't happened yet?

RM: I'm not sure! (laughs) Because even after I was making albums, you know, my dad would

occasionally say things like, "Well, what are you going to do about a career?"

AT: (laughs)

RM: But I, real honestly, I mean, I talk about that side of my parents, but on the other side, I think my parents, I think they were really smart parents. I think they were, actually, pretty progressive for the time. And they were always, I mean, one thing that they really wanted me to know is, what makes me tick, what am I about, how do I approach life. And, I think they assumed that no one's approach to life was gonna be like anybody else's. And the way that we, the way that we encounter it, and the way that we deal with it, the way we process stuff, is all very individualistic. And I think what my parents really wanted for me was for me to be who I am. Even though I may be... whether or not they liked who I am. And I think that I was real lucky, in that sense. Because I think a lot of parents hand people over a blueprint and say, "This is how you're supposed to do it." And my parents, I think, kind of drew a picture and said, "Here's the good stuff in life. How do you get there?"

AT: Do you find... do they like the music? I mean, do they...

RM: My dad liked country music, a little bit. But see, my mom grew up Quaker. And so she's got that kind of quiet thing. And, you know, the amazing thing is, I think it might be genetic, I mean, I think there's maybe a 'Quaker' gene, because, I find that, in my own, at my own place back home I don't typically have music on all the time. I mean, I maybe will listen to an album every day or so, but a lot times I don't even get through an album.

AT: When you do listen, what do you listen to?

RM: I listen to a big variety of music. I really like the

Chieftans... but you know what, I say that, I mean, I'm not sure that I listen to them all that much. [Artie laughs] The last thing I listened to was the sound track to Silverado. Just cuz I was working on some carpentry projects and I needed that little 'zip'.

AT: (laughs) You know, speaking of carpentry, when you're not doing music, what do you do?

RM: Well, for the last... since last fall I've been building a house.

AT: Really? By hand? Yourself?

RM: Yes! (laughs)

AT: Why do you laugh?

RM: (still laughing) Well, because I'm so nervous that I'm gonna go home and it won't be there anymore! You know, you can plan on getting someone else to do stuff that we knew nothing about. But it's hard to get people to work for you when you're not around to check on their work. So we dug up the found... You know, we're building two... I live on a Navajo reservation, you know. So, we wanted to build these traditional Navajo eight-sided houses called 'hogans'. They're log houses, and they have eight sides. They're really, really beautiful to look at.

And so we decided, we can do this, we can do this. We'll get someone to pour the foundations. So we dug, and being a musician I am not terribly, well, I know a lot of musicians who are wonderfully mathematical. I'm terrible at math. And so, man, we dug - it looked like the Grand Canyon by the time we dug out the, the trench where we were gonna put the footer. And, you know, got the footer poured, and then we're like, ok, we're gonna leave for a month. And so then, we hired someone to come in and put the foundation down. They never did it. We got back,

> *it wasn't done, so we hired someone else, they didn't do it. So when we got back then we just did it ourselves. And then, since then, we keep going, we'll get someone to do this, we'll get someone else. No one does, so we, we've done it all. And it's, the cool thing about it is, first of all, a hogan is just a perfectly nice place. Even if you do it badly, it's cool.*

AT: (laughs) Sounds like the kind of place I need to build!

> *RM: Yeah! Well, it's... the problem is, I gotta find out why it has to have eight... well, they don't have to have eight, 'cause some hogans out there only have seven sides. Some have six.*
>
> *(Mitch starts guitar intro into 'New Mexico')*
>
> *RM: But I mean that the perfect hogan has eight. And, um, where was I at?*

[Mitch sings 'New Mexico', Rich sings backup]

AT: What do you do when you're not doing music?

> *RM: The wonderful thing about building something is when you do music, you're never done. The longer I'm involved in music, the more I really think that music is a performance, it's a performance art. It's not a product thing. It's kind of like that question: When a tree falls in a forest does anybody hear it. You kinda go, if you wrote a song out on paper, if you recorded a song and nobody listened to it, would there be music there. And of course I don't know the answer to that, but I know if there is music there, there's no point in it being there. That when it really connects is when somebody hears it.*

AT: Let me ask you something. I just want to jump back one point, the performance versus product argument - the mechanics of doing an album, getting it distributed, getting it recorded, getting it out there, and usually touring behind it, dictate a certain sort of product consciousness with the

people who have to do that part of it.

> *RM: Right.*

AT: Is that a problem for you when they say, hey, that's my music, and they try to, like, ship it out and try to get it to fit the 'box,' so to speak?

> *RM: Yeah, that's sometimes difficult, but what you learn is that you have your public thing, and then you have your 'private' stock, if they just don't like a song. I mean, it's good for you, in terms of developing your sense of who you are, because what you learn is, from a commercial point of view, not everybody's gonna like everything you write. But you have to decide, then you have the opportunity to decide for yourself, do I still like this song, do I know why I like this song, what is good about it or what's bad about it. You get to still make your own evaluations. And if you decide the song is good, even though your record company doesn't like it, you play it for yourself.*

AT: Does it happen very often, that you're done, and... how does that work, exactly, for people who don't know the system. Do you sit down with a bunch of people from the company and say, "Ok, we've just finished this, sit and listen," and then they evaluate, or do you send it to them?

> *RM: Well, the way we've always done it at Reunion is, I have an A&R guy. A&R is 'artist and repertoire.' And what they do is, they kind of help you make selections about what songs you're going to record. And then you work with your producer. So normally my producer - Reed Arvin has done everything but one album with me. Reed and Don Donahue (my A&R guy at Reunion) and me would sit down, and I would bring in several songs I had written in the course of a year. If I wasn't a writer, what would happen would be, A&R would go out and look for songs for me, and that sort of thing. We kind of come in, and we kind of talk about, you know, I play them*

the songs. And then they take notes, and they go, "you know, we really like this, this one we're not really sure about, we really like this." You narrow down the list to ten songs. And I have input in that. It's not that you're outside the process.

Then you start working on arrangements. Like, how are we gonna present this? What is this about, what is that about? The thing is, is as I've learned a little bit more about their expectations and that kind of thing, what I've been able to do is get more involved by being more selective before I even go in there. And kind of going, well I know there are things that I've written that they may like, but I just don't think really fits on this particular 'collection.' And generally, I think a lot of people do this, you generally approach an album as a collection. And there has to be something cohesive about it.

AT: Do you have a favorite of all the stuff you've done so far?

RM: My favorite album?

AT: Yeah, of your own.

RM: Well, there are two that are in big competition, and for different reasons. I really like A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band. Just because that was a really hard album to make, because we were working with a lot of people. And everybody had a lot of ownership in it. So there was a lot of conflict. Which is one of the... that's one of the great things about I think as a Christian. I was telling someone the other day, man, I have so much more empathy for God now, I feel sorry for Him! Because you kind of go, as the writer, or one of the two primary writers (I wrote a lot of songs with a guy named Beaker), as the writer, you kind of have this idea of what the song is like, and you hear it the way, I mean, you get this distinct idea of how it's supposed to sound.

Well then, you start working with musicians, and they change it ever so little, but for you it's a real significant change. Sometimes then by the time you get done there's the producer, there's the record company, there's all these people. Sometimes by the time you get done you listen to it and you go, "That's not what I wrote!"

I kind of go, I think this is why people enjoy being creative, because in your world, you are god. I mean, not big 'G' God, but little 'g' god. You get to call the shots. If you want the grass to be purple, you can make it that way. And if you choose to collaborate, you bring other people in and they get to color it, and they get to do those other things.

And it's a good exercise, I think, spiritually, because you have to set aside your own ideas. And the great thing, the reason that I like A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band was because there were so many people involved and there was so much conflict. And to watch that all get hammered out, and you end up with an album and you go, man, this shouldn't have worked. But I think it does. That was great.

The other album that I like of my own, (laughs) and I don't listen to either of these! But I was at a radio station, and I had forgotten how much I liked Never Picture Perfect. And I was thinking about that when I was listening at the radio station. And I went, you know, this is an album that was pretty much me and Reed, just the two of us. And I remember it as being one album where, that was the album Reed and I conflicted a lot.

But on Never Picture Perfect, Reed really heard something in my songs that I didn't hear, in themselves, and he really pulled it out. I mean, really. That was when I guess I had matured enough that I began to really respect what a producer does. And I

realized, man, I sometimes have, like, clung to my ideas, not because they were the best ideas, but just because they were mine. And in his work he was able to take what I had written and really amplify it. So that was a great experience.

AT: When you have those creative conflicts, when you're collaborating with someone, is that the hardest part about what you do, I mean, of your life's work? Those times of conflict arise and then you have to A) resolve it as an artist, and then B) resolve it as a Christian, sort of resolve it with the attitude, I must love my brother, I must not bash him or whatever, is that the difficult part of what you do?

RM: That's at least one of the really difficult parts

AT: Is that, how do you work through those things, do you go back on yourself and go, "You know, I should have done this

RM: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah. Hindsight is 20/20. And it's very telling. I mean, stress is a, that's the test. That's when you look at your life and you go, "Wow, I'm not really very patient, am I?" Or, "Gosh, I really am controlling and manipulative, aren't I?" Or that's when you begin to recognize all of those things that you read about in human development classes, and you go, "Wow, I'm still just a young person, because, you know, I didn't handle this very maturely."

AT: There's two things I want to get to in terms of the collaboration question, one of the things, I got this thing in the mail. This is from a cd club. And there's a thing down here, and it's talking about your music, and it says, let's see, it talks about The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 1: "Though Rich had written and recorded a handful of albums that were striking for the strength and diversity of the songs, nothing could have prepared us for this. Modern songs, cycle of faith, The World begins with bagpipes in the distance." (which is very beautiful, by the way) "Then a child's voice singing the simplest of praise songs, 'Step By

Step'" - here's the quote - "Written by Mullins' best friend, Beaker, shortly after Mullins had taught him his first chords on the guitar."

> *RM: (laughs)*

AT: And it goes on to talk about the rest of the songs on this album. I want to ask you about that. This is an anecdotal moment here, and... is that, would you like to tell us... ok, like, "Beaker, this is 'D Major,'" I mean, like, "Put your fingers in..." like, and all of a sudden he took off and wrote a song?

> *RM: No, no... and, and this is where you get really confused, as you read that stuff and you go, "Gosh, I don't remember it that way. What did it, how did it really happen?" (laughter) I think Beaker played guitar before I met him. The thing that I liked about... Beaker and I have co-written for years now. The reason why I love to co-write with Beaker is because he's not a musician. And I think, as a musician, sometimes you get your head so far up your little musician world that you stop relating to people who aren't musicians themselves. And Beaker has the effect of pulling me back into "Here's the real world. Here is where people really live." He has that, he's kind of an 'Everyman' kind of guy. And so, this is the sort of, this is how... (laughs) this is how... yeah, I worked with him on guitar some. I don't know if I taught him his absolute first chord.*

AT: Well, that's why I asked because I saw this and I said, "Well, that's sweet but is that really what happened?" I thought this was interesting, I got this in the mail about two weeks ago and I said, "I've gotta say this. I've gotta bring this next week and ask Rich about it."

[performance of "Creed"] (Rich on hammer dulcimer, Mitch on guitar)

AT: There's also something else here, it says, let's see, where's the quote here. "Space does not permit me to laud

this record any further, but suffice to say that this is one of my top ten Christian albums of all time, and I have no doubt it will stay that way for years to come." It was written by the author here. What else can I say? How do you resolve that, when someone says, "In my life, this is one of the top albums of all time"? I mean, that's a pretty big statement.

> *RM: Well, I just feel really thankful (laughs). You kind of go, I remember one time, 'cause I think I'm a little... I think I suffer from a 'messiah' complex. I think a lot of musicians do, and a lot of people who are put on pedestals. I remember one time we were getting ready to play at this... we were getting ready to do this concert, and there were a lot of people coming, and I was really going... I was just really having a personal struggle at the time. Every one in the band was struggling with personal stuff. I was kind of going, man, what a goofed-up bunch of people to have to go out there. And here's, you know, however many people in this audience, and we're supposed to go out there and give them hope, and we're supposed to go, you know, and I'm taking this walk while I'm doing this, and I'm going, you know, this is really stupid. You're calling on the wrong people. The wrong people, all the wrong people get the attention and stuff. And I was really kind of going, gosh, I wish the people were just coming to be entertained. Because I don't really know what I have to give them today.*
>
> *And I was kind of complaining to God about it. And I was walking along, and I saw this guy who was talking to himself, this old, possibly homeless man. And he was talking, and talking, and talking. And people are not only... they're either totally ignoring him and walking just by, or they're actually avoiding him. And I sat there and looked at the guy, and suddenly realized, man, what an honor people pay you when they listen to you. And what a tragedy that so many people are trying to be heard, and no one*

gives them a listen. And that kind of shook me up a little bit. It made me take back all of my complaints.

AT: Let me ask you about another collaborative effort that I have not heard. I read about this, and I was fascinated by the concept, the 'Kid Brothers of St. Frank.' And there's a musical attached to that. How is that, can you, just for the listening audience...

RM: This is a long story!

AT: Yeah, I meant to, I mean, I'm very curious about this because it was a large piece of information I read about it. I was like, I've got to ask him about this.

RM: Yeah. Well, when I was a senior in high school I saw the movie, Brother Sun, Sister Moon. And having grown up Protestant, I had no idea what the, I had no idea about the lives of the saints, of any of the saints. And I'd always just thought they were, you know, sort of like 'demigods.' I thought Catholics were like Hindus.

And when I saw the life of St. Francis, this film, I was real kind of turned on to the whole... I was kind of going, that's really what I want to do. I mean, I really do want to live in poverty, I really do want my life to mean something. I really do want to imitate Christ, and live according to the rule of the Gospels, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And so I guess I have tried to do that throughout my life, but what I realized at some point is that you can't do that outside the context of a community. That Christianity is not a solo 'date,' it's a communal faith.

And Beaker and I had talked about that a lot, and so we decided to form the Kid Brothers of St. Frank. Which was just kind of a very loose sort of - if you can have a loose commitment to each other - that we would, you know, have accountability, those kinds of things. And we called it the Kid Brothers of St. Frank

just because we thought it was a funny name. Plus, we both, I think, wanted to be Franciscans, but we didn't even have the guts to be Catholics, let alone be Franciscans, and then, you know, because of the St. Frank thing, we had talked about gee, wouldn't it be cool to like rewrite the life of St. Francis, as if he were a nineteenth-century cowboy? And we talked about that for a long time, and never, you know, we were just tossing it around.

And the biggest problem was that we had no idea what St. Frank would be like. And then I was at Friends University, and I was finishing up a music education degree, and I met a guy named Mitch McVicker. And I went back to where me and Beaker lived, and I said, "Man, I've just met Frank. I've met this guy who looks like him, talks like him, the whole bit." And now Mitch is in the Kid Brothers of St. Frank. (laughs) And we were able to, we were able to write the whole musical. So that's been a blast.

AT: So now how does that work? Is that, do you tour that, or is it recorded? I mentioned I read, I thought I read that it was recorded somewhere.

RM: Yeah, it's been recorded, and in fact, the Friday night performance at Wheaton will be the first time that there will be a full-blown production of this. And also the first time that you can buy a cd of the soundtrack - of the 10 feature songs from the soundtrack. So, that is exciting. It was one of the more fun projects I've ever worked on.

AT: Let me jump to a more - I guess to a more philosophical kind of track here. And you may even have to take a minute to think about this answer, and that's ok.

RM: No, I never think about answers!

AT: Oh, good! Ok, we'll continue the flow. If you weren't doing music, what would you be doing?

RM: I would be teaching.

AT: Really?

RM: Umhum.

AT: Anything particular?

RM: Music. I would teach music. Because I think, the thing that I love about music, is that it's something that everybody can win at. I think there are two things in school - I think it's important for, in terms of how we develop as people, I think that everybody needs to work, and everyone needs to enjoy the fruit of their work. I think there are two areas where that can happen for everybody. One is athletics. And, especially now that you have... I think that for such a long time people, until... you know, I think the Special Olympics prove that a person can have profound challenges, and... but can still win. That athletics, that's the sort of thing where we're given the opportunity, not to compete with other people and beat them, but we're given the opportunity to stretch ourselves.

And most of us, like, I have no physical genius about me. I can't dribble a ball and run at the same time, I can't do lay-ups, I'm not an athlete. But my experience as a kid was, I was made fun of so much that what I did then, is, I wouldn't participate. And I think I cheated myself out of a lot of fun. And I cheated myself out of developing skills that I think are there, not in any kind of, you know, talented way. But I think that just about anybody should be able to be athletic enough to participate in team sports and have a good time. Or run, or do solo, those kinds of things. But I think there's something that happens, I think it's good for you. I think everyone can win at that.

And I think music is the other thing. I don't think everybody's gonna be, I don't think everybody has a

> > *genius for music. But I think that everybody can win at it. That a kid... you know I've seen this in schools, a kid can play a piece very badly by college standards, or, even by standards of where the kid is at. But, something happens in them when a kid does that.*
> >
> > *And so I kinda go... in order for us to... I think one of the things that we benefit from... and art would be another area... and interestingly enough, when they start making cutbacks, art, phys ed, and music are the first ones to go...*
>
> *AT: (Interrupting Rich mid-sentence...) I was gonna ask you about that, because I was watching, I dunno, I guess it was CNN or something, yesterday, and Richard Marx was on and he was going about... He has a new cd that is out and he has taken on as a cause to really try to get schools to bring that back, to educate, have people. Have parents get to their congressmen or whoever and say, "We need this back in our schools."*
>
> *[Bach mandolin duet]*
>
> *AT: I wondered about that, I was thinking about, like, back in my own childhood, and I remember, you know, we did have a music class where even people who didn't play anything, they would sit down and say to them, ok, this is music. And this is Mozart. And this is Bach. And this is Duke Ellington. And these are the things that I came along with. And I started thinking about that, and I said, you know, there isn't any real appreciation for music anymore outside of, "I'm learning how to play this. I'm going to conservatory for this." So I wonder if maybe, at this point, do we, as Americans, and as American Christians, do we know enough about music, do you think?*
>
> > *RM: Well, I'm going to just say this, I mean, you know, everyone's worried about what kids listen to. Tipper Gore is all on a roar about it, and I wish she'd go someplace else and roar. There's a... I think the*

reason why people like bad music is because they're not exposed, in a positive way, to good music. And I don't think that Bach is necessarily good and 'Ice T' is necessarily bad. I'm not sure that those labels apply in music. What I think happens is that our experience in music is very limited. And not only do people respond to music... you know, it's like, I've noticed that the metal heads all dress very much alike, they all watch the same tv shows, they all drive the same kind of cars. Jazz people all wear berets, and, you know, smoke little pipes, and that kind of thing. And you kind of go, people make an identification. Music comes to be representative of a certain subculture. And people tend to identify with these different subcultures.

And I think what happens, I know when I was a youth pastor in a church for a while, or a youth director in a church for a while, and the parents were all worried because the kids were listening to music that they thought was bad. And they wanted me to do something about it and I was a little bit miffed, because I'm kind of going, why do your kids have stereos if you don't want them to listen to music? I mean, they don't have to have a stereo. And didn't you listen to stuff that your parents were worried about? [Artie laughs] But, you know, you've managed to be human enough to produce offspring, and hold down jobs, and stuff.

What I did was, I just started taking them to bluegrass festivals. We started listening to all kinds of different sorts of music, exposing them to all kinds of things. And telling them, man, you don't have to let your peers decide for you what you're gonna listen to. And it's more important to be who you are than to be who they say you are. And amazingly, kids started getting into other kinds of music, kids started kind of diverting away from this group that they were really sucked into.

> *I think music education has failed in a... has problems, I don't think it has failed. But I think it has problems in a couple of areas. First of all, I think that, especially now in the information age, people are, people think that life has to do with practical stuff. You know, everybody has turned into someone from rural Indiana. And that's not bad, that's a good value, I mean, it's important that people can read, write, and do arithmetic. That kind of thing is very important. But that's not what makes us human. That's not where we get our identity, that's not where the magic happens.*
>
> *I think that it's important... I think music... the reason why music, athletics, arts, those kinds of things are important is because, what we really want to do is not make people who are merely good employees or good employers. That's not, that shouldn't be the goal of education. That is the goal of the government, and their involvement in education, because the government wants nice tax payers. And nice eighteen-year-old boys to send off to the next war they conjure up. What we really want in education is to help people become who they are. And music, athletics, art, those kinds of things do that. The problem is, the music education community has decided that their job is to indoctrinate people and tell them why it's cooler to listen to Mozart than it is to listen to anything else.*

AT: Do you think that's because of the way music, contemporary music in our culture, has become so, I hate to even say commercialized - commercialized isn't really the right word I want to use

> *RM: You know, my question about that is, so what is Mozart? What is he? Wasn't he just trying to pay bills too?*

AT: I know! (Interrupting Rich multiple times) And if you go back into music history, a lot of what we know today as

great music was music that was commissioned by the Emperor of so-and-so, or the Prime Minister of this place or that. But yet, in our society now it's like, it's commercial, it can't be good. It's a commodity, it's popular, so it's not high art or whatever. And I'm wondering, do you think that's connected to why we've kind of like just let this music thing drift? And art, too, for that matter, in schools and stuff.

> *RM: Well, I think the preoccupation with what people call classical music is just pure ethnocentricity. They decided that what happened in Vienna, Austria, a couple hundred years ago or a hundred years ago, that that's what music is about, and that this is the standard by which we measure all music. They forget that there's a whole world out there. And it's... I think it's pure ethnocentricity.*

[performance of "Brother's Keeper" by Rich and Mitch]

AT: That's interesting, because I know that if you... just recently I was in Tower Records, and I was like flipping through the 'World Music' section. And I'm saying, well, all music's of the world. It's just, this is the 'World Music' section.

> *RM: Yeah. So like, so why isn't Cheryl Crowe in there? Where is she from, Mars?*

AT: Exactly! Know what I'm saying? It's all from the world, we're all from the same planet, why does this have to be 'World Music'? And what was in there was like, some Brazilian, some Rain Forest, you know, all kinds of stuff like that. Now, if I lived in one of these places, if I was from South Africa, that would be the music. That wouldn't be, like, 'World Music.' So...

> *RM: That's why I think the whole, the politically correct movement is so hypocritical, because they try so hard to be even-handed and they're so off-handed. You know, it's kind of like Melissa Ethridge singing these really sexual songs to women, and*

feminists aren't upset about how she objectifies females. But if I or you sang the same song we would be attacked as being, you know, that we're using women. I kind of go, well, thank God for Melissa Ethridge, now at least feminists understand that sexual drives are part of our human experience, and they're acceptable.

AT: Well, I'm going to use this as an opportunity for a really cheap segue because I'm gonna have you do some music now.

RM: Okay!

AT: Rich, thanks for talking, it was great!

RM: Thanks!

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Rich Mullins Interview by The Phantom Tollbooth

Rich Mullins

Concert quotes from Rich Mullins' Friday, December 6, 1996 appearance at New Creation Christian Fellowship, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The secret of rock music: "*If you can't be good, be loud*."

The current trends in worship: *"Shallow, mindless, stupid, and perfectly harmless, at best."*

"*I don't want to be tolerated. Argue with me, and I will respect you."*

"It never fails. God will put people in your path that irritate you, especially if you're prone to be irritated.

"*I can understand why people would have doubts about the Bible. It's a weird, strange, goofy book!"*

Rich Mullins is one of the major fixtures of CCM. A string of his worship songs, including "Awesome God," "Sometimes By Steps," and "Sing Your Praise To The Lord," have found their way into the common psalter. He is a household name, and we know what we expect from Christian household names: someone successfully living out his faith in the conventional way, free of mistakes, comfortably well-off; a celebrity whose accomplishments elevate him above the rest of us struggling fools.

In a church sanctuary seating hundreds, treating the stage as his living room, the audience as his guests, Rich Mullins made his music and debunked himself. In between old favorites and new material from his latest CD, *Songs*, he had strong words for his listeners on many contemporary evangelical sacred cows, yet he still managed to unite us through our mutual love of Christ. Linda and Shari sat down with Rich for ten minutes after the performance.

Tollbooth: You said some really tough things about CCM in your concert tonight.

Mullins: I agree. I was really nasty tonight about CCM.

Tollbooth: We're covering a lot of the alternative groups, basically anybody who plays Cornerstone Festival, and we're finding that maybe that attitude isn't so uncommon.

Mullins: It's all the same. I think the most naive thing I've seen lately is the whole genre of alternative music. I mean it can't be alternative. As soon as it's accepted, then it's no longer alternative. As soon as rock'n'roll became commercial, it stopped being rock'n'roll.

Tollbooth: We go round and round about what are the alternatives. Shouldn't all alternatives be in alternative music?

Mullins: There really are none. I sound like a terrible determinist, and I'm not really. But basically all the big stuff is predetermined. You have no say whatsoever on what your folks are going to be like; you have no say whatsoever in terms of how tall you re going to be, how short, your basic build, your basic stamina. There are a lot of things that we don't have choices about. It could be a purely American phenomena, this craze about choices. It's just part of that illusion we've created in a feel-good culture.

Tollbooth: It sort of goes with prosperity; we have more options.

Mullins: But no real options. The truth is, everyone I know is going to be dead in the next thirty to forty years, so, what's the big deal? You kinda shrug your shoulders, and you say, "After you've been dead a few years, it isn't going to make a difference."

The thing about being forty is it's not as surprising to me as it used to be. I used to think about death a lot, and it was always a little bit intimidating to think about. Now I know a lot of dead people. It's not as big a deal as it used to be, but maybe because I'm not the one who died. I'm the one who's still living. I think I always grew up with a good attitude about it. You know, that's the advantage of coming from a large, extended family.

Tollbooth: I've seen you in festival settings before and have never heard you speak at such length. You have the capability of being quite charming and also extremely offensive.

Mullins: I love that combination.

Tollbooth: You certainly spoke your mind.

Mullins: Oh, I'm so guarded! If people really knew my mind, they'd go, "Oh, my gosh, where's the gasoline! We gotta burn this guy!" (laugher by all)

See, I think a lot of my songs are really political. I think nobody gets it, but it's hard for me to divide up my politics and my religious convictions. There's something offensive to me about having an American flag in a church building. When the CIA pretended to be missionaries and caused trouble in Chile so that all missionaries were kicked out, I think that makes the United States the enemy of the kingdom of God. I think a government that requires 18-year-old boys to register for the draft is anti-life. See, all the pro-lifers, they only think life is sacred if you are a fetus. I agree that life is sacred to fetuses, but I also think it's sacred to 18-year-olds. Where were you people when Nixon was in the White House? When Lyndon Johnson was escalating the war? Not that I necessarily think that everybody has to be a pacifist; I don't. But it does seem funny to me that so many people who are anti-abortion are pro-capital punishment. So many people who are anti-capital punishment are pro-abortion.

All I ask of anybody is that you make a little effort to be consistent. Life is one of those things that G. K. Chesterton says almost makes sense, which is the really tragic thing about life.

I really struggle with American Christianity. I'm not really sure that people with our cultural disabilities are capable of having souls, or being saved.

Tollbooth: Cultural disabilities?

Mullins: We could call it that. People who grow up in a culture that worships pleasure, leisure, and affluence. I think that's where the church is doubly damned when they use Jesus as a vehicle for achieving all of that. Like, if you give a tithe, He'll make you rich. Why? Are you hacking Him off or something? If you give a tithe, you get rid of ten percent of the root of all evil. You should be giving ninety percent. Cause God can handle money better than we can.

Tollbooth: What are you doing at Hilltop Christian School (on a Navajo Indian reservation) where you moved last year?

Mullins: I'm not doing anything there right now.

Tollbooth: What happened?

Mullins: They found out I wasn't a fundamentalist.

Tollbooth: (Laughter) Excuse me?

Mullins: Big surprise, huh?

Tollbooth: Your theology threw you out? Your beliefs?

Mullins: It wasn't like anybody pulled the carpet out from under me. I believe it's better for any organization to go the wrong way together than to go different ways separately. I totally understand, appreciate, and respect people who say, "we're not sure about this, but this is what we're doing. You really need to fit in with this, or you shouldn't be here." And I can respect that. We both agreed that I don't really need to be there right now, just because I don't "get" fundamentalists, and I don't really know that I want to be stuck with a bunch of 'em.

Tollbooth: But you're still out there. (Window Rock, New Mexico) Do you live near the mission?

Mullins: Yeah, we (Rich and roommate Mitch McVicker) live across the street, and we get along great with everybody at the mission. Everyone is really wonderful. In the meantime, it's given me a year to get to know more people out there personally and to become more familiar with the culture--to have a few more experiences teaching in different settings besides a formal classroom setting and Bible studies, to learn a little bit more about how you communicate to groups of people from that culture. I think it's been very providential.

Tollbooth: So you're out there, and it wasn't exactly what you planned, but you can still stay there on the reservation and not be part of the mission?

Mullins: I actually live on private land. I live in the checkerboard area. You can't get to my house without going through tribal land.

Tollbooth: White Americans can have trouble staying in the reservations.

Mullins: That all depends. What we've heard from people around us is that either you are accepted or you're not. If you're not, you never will be; if you are, you don't have to worry. I know we have been, but I always feel this way. Maybe I'm just really insensitive.

Tollbooth: Tell us about your musical, *Canticle of the Plains.*

Mullins: Well, we're re-writing it again.

Tollbooth: Again?

Mullins: Yeah. I think you just keep re-writing it, no matter what.

Tollbooth: Until someone yanks it out of your hands and throws it on the stage?

Mullins: Well, I'm not going to let anybody do that. I'm not really sure

what I want to do with it. For one thing, I'm not really sure who's going to be interested in it.

Tollbooth: That was one of the things I wanted to ask you.

Mullins: I really have no idea. The coolest thing about working on a musical has just been getting away from a record company, getting away from any kind of organization, and saying, "man, let's do something for the shear fun of it." And then there are all of these things you have to do, but you just take it one step at a time. It's been a real exercise in faith. It's been very, very rewarding, and I feel really excited about the people working with us on the project.

Tollbooth: Is it still a western based on the life of Francis of Assisi?

Mullins: Yes. We've performed it twice now--once in Indianapolis, and once in Phoenix--just to try it out, to see what's working and what's not. Each time we perform it, we come back, tear it apart, and start from scratch. We ask, "what are we really trying to say, and how can we?"

The biggest thing, in terms of writing, is that I have a tendency to preach way more than I ought to. So we just went though and said, "OK, let's just cut out all the preaching." And that cut out a good third of it, which was really nice, because we don't want it to be unbearably long.

We make the same mistakes writing plays that I used to make writing songs. When I started writing songs, I thought you had to say everything that you knew in every song. You can always tell a young writer because they always do that. And you just kind of go, "OK, I know all about your theology, but I have no interest at all in your song."

People say, "Writing is such hard work." No! Writing is fun. Re-writing is the hard part. Re-writing is the drudgery, where you go back and cut in order to make the pace right, in order to make it flow. You have to decide what are we going to get rid of.

Tollbooth: It is work! Not to be taken too seriously, because it's CCM.

Mullins: Well, because it's human. Nothing that we do should be taken too seriously.

By Linda Thompson Stonehocker

The music for *Canticle Of The Plains* is already recorded, featuring Kevin Smith and Mike Tate of DC Talk.

Send $16.50 for cd and shipping to:

Kid Brothers of St. Frank P.O. Box 11526 Wichita, KS 67211

On September 19th, 1997, Rich Mullins died after a traffic accident near Peoria Illinois. Rich was in his jeep with Mitch McVicker in route to Wichita for a concert. The jeep lost control and flipped, ejecting both men. Rich was killed instantly. Rich was 41years old. Please keep Rich's family and his friends in your Prayers. A Memorial in Rich's honor has been established for Compassion USA.

The Jordan is waiting for me to cross thru
My heart is aging I can tell
So Lord I'm begging for one last favour from You
Here's my heart
Take it where you will

This life has shown me how we're mended
And how we're torn
How it's O.K. to be lonely
As long as you're free
Sometimes my ground was stony
And sometimes covered up with thorns
And only you could make it what it had to be
And now that it's done
If they dressed me like a pauper
Or if they dined me like a prince
If they lay me with my fathers
Or if my ashes scatter on the wind
I don't care

When I go I wanna go out like Elijah
With a whirlwind to fuel my chariot of fire
And when I look back on the stars
It'll be like a candlelight in Central Park
And it won't break my heart to say goodbye

There's people been friendly

But they'd never be your friends
Sometimes this has bent me to the ground
But now that this is all ending I want to
Hear some music once again
'Cause it's the finest thing
That I have ever found

But the Jordan is waiting
Though I ain't never seen the other side
Still they say you can't take in
The things you have here
So on the road to salvation
I stick out my thumb and He gives me a ride
And his music is already falling on my ears
There's people been talking
They say they're worried about my soul
Well I'm here to tell you i'll keep rocking
Til I'm sure it's my time to roll

When I go I wanna go out like Elijah
With a whirlwind to fuel my chariot of fire
And when I look back on the stars
It'll be like a candlelight in Central Park
And it won't break my heart to say goodbye

from "Elijah" by Rich Mullins

"When you remember me, it means you have carried something of who I am with you, that I have left some mark of who I am on who you are. I means that you can summon me back to your mind even though countless years and miles may stand between us. It means that if we meet again, you will know me. It means that even after I die, you can still see my face and hear my voice and speak to me in your heart."---Frederick Buechner
Information of the Jesus Project

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A Message to the Media

kidbrothers.net/interviews/media.html

by Rich Mullins, given to assembled media at Creation '96 festival

> *Having been covered by Christian media a few times, one of the things that I hope you all understand is that people really read the stuff you write. Sometimes I think as a musician, it's good for me to have people challenge me to really think about what I'm trying to say. The thing that is sometimes alarming to me about Christian media is, reading some of the magazines that have articles about me, it's like reading People Magazine. It's like reading any other kind of garbage -it just has a Christian name on it.*
>
> *I hope that you have the opportunity to write something that people are going to read. I hope that you can start thinking about writing more stuff that has something to do with* ***something****. That's always a challenge, because it's always a little bit scary. If you say something meaningful you're very likely to turn people off. Let's face it - we all have to sell product. But I would just like to encourage you to realize, also, that at some point, there isn't going to be any more product to sell. Someday we're all going to be dead and the amount of product we sold is not going to be all that important.*
>
> *But what may be important is the idea that you might be able to challenge someone to think outside the lines of conventional, evangelical Christianity. You might be able to challenge someone and encourage them to realize that maybe God is bigger than the conventions of middle-class American "Churchianity." And I'd really like to encourage you to do that and to not be afraid of it. I think that a lot of people are maybe just a little afraid and I'd just like to say what angels say to people when they meet them - they say, "Don't be afraid." What you have to say - you need to say it, not because it's right, but because it's in you to say. Let people read it and figure out for themselves where they're at. And the more free you are to think and the more brave you are in your communication of that, the more you're going to encourage other people to begin to think and to be able to be brave. Not so that we create yet another generation of people who are totally sold on*

themselves, but so that maybe we can break out of the ideas that we've got ourselves stuck into by following the masses - following the group.

*And beyond that, I would also like to encourage you to stop thinking of what you're doing as **ministry**. Start realizing that your **ministry** is how much of a tip you leave when you eat in a restaurant; when you leave a hotel room whether you leave it all messed up or not; whether you flush your own toilet or not. Your ministry is the way that you **love people**. And you love people when you write something that is encouraging to them, something challenging - those kinds of things. You love people when you call your wife and say, "I'm going to be late for dinner," instead of letting her burn the meal. You love people when maybe you cook a meal for your wife sometime, because you know she's really tired. Loving people - being respectful toward them - is **much** more important than writing or doing music.*

*I don't know if you've ever heard, there's this Chinese guy that used to work at a deli, or at a little bakery shop, pastry shop, across the street from where Billy Sunday used to preach in Boston. And people by the thousands were going to hear Billy Sunday preach. Between services this little coffee shop would be jam-packed with people who had just been to church, and the people were so **cruel** to this kid. He was a college student, he was trying to get along. He didn't speak really good English and people were very angry at him because of that. People didn't leave good tips and people would leave chunks of trash on the floor after they'd eaten. He was so sickened by Christians and Christianity that when he went back to China and became Chairman Mao, he was determined to wipe the church out of China.*

What I'm wondering is what would have happened if people who were going to church, people who were discussing sermons would have been generous to him, would have been kind to him, would have in their dealings with him reflected the love of Christ? Sometimes we think that our writing and our music is so important that we have the right to run over people. Just please remember that we don't.

Remember what St. Francis said:

"Preach always. If necessary, use words."

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Creation Festival Radio Special

Mount Union, Pennsylvania
June 27, 1996
Brian Beatty

Brian Beatty: This is Brian Beatty at the Creation Festival with first time visitor here to the festival, Rich Mullins. It's great to have you with us today.

> *Rich Mullins: Thanks, it's nice to be in the shade!*

BB: Actually, this is your first time as I mentioned to creation. What are you anticipating about your time tonight?

> *RM: Well, I don't know. I have no idea what to expect. That's kinda the fun thing about your first time is you kinda go, "Whew, what's this?"*

BB: Much of your music, Rich, is a very intimate sound, folk sounding, acoustic instruments. One that someone would sit and listen to in their living room. But you've got a setting here of forty to fifty thousand people. Is it kinda overwhelming? Do you think you're going to be able to reach the one on one? How's it feel from the stage?

> *RM: Well, from the stage, it's kinda the same whether you've got a thousand people or however many people are here. You can only see so many people in the course of an evening anyway. So I guess my approach is that I just try to sing to one person, no matter how many people are in the audience. 'Cause otherwise, I think I might get nervous*

BB: Creation festival is unique in that there are now parents that are bringing their children. Much of your music speaks across the generations. Why don't we speak about your writing styles. What has influenced you as a writer of your music?

> *RM: Well, you know, pretty much the same kinds of people that*

influenced everybody. I listened to all that pop junk when I was growing up, and of course I was affected by it. I was real fortunate to have somewhat of an education in music, which has been I think very helpful.

I think probably more than anything that has affected it is kindof that attitude of trying to enjoy life and receive it for what it is and.. That's kindof the answer I have about listening. You don't listen to reggae and expect the same thing as if you're listening to a waltz. And try to appreciate each different style and each thing for what it is and not expect it to be something it's not.

So then when I write a song, I think the biggest job of a writer is to keep himself open to the moment and not expect every song to.. A lot of times when you start writing a song, you don't really know what it's about. And you just have to have the guts to go with it and say, "Man, I'm not sure where I'm going here, but I'm just going to write it out." Then you get done and you play it for someone and you say, "Does that make any sense?" And they say, "I'm not sure it makes sense, but I think it's about this." And you go, "Yeah, that's exactly what it's about!"

BB: And your music has done that from album to album. It's almost like you go through a new culture each album and a new influence. Is that something you're purposely trying to do, to scope out and get influences from Appalachia or Celtic culture or Native American. How are you trying to best do that through your albums?

RM: Well, I think that's happening to me a lot of times personally. And then musically, it comes out musically. I try not to be too deliberate about music. I think it's more fun if it's sort of an accident.

BB: And rich, theologically, your music has been able to cross many denominational lines - to reach a broad base of people that are in the church. Much of your music is about grace. Speak about grace and what it means to you in your heart and God's love for you.

RM: Well, I think.. it would be hard to say anything about grace, because anything you'd say would be less than grace. You know, grace is a big thing.

I think one reason a lot of people don't experience grace is because they don't have any idea that they need it.

A while ago, I was kinda hacked off and I was kindof going, "God, why am I such a freak? Why couldn't I have been a good basketball player? I wanted to be a jock or something. Instead, I'm a musician. I feel like such a sissy all the time. Why couldn't I be just like a regular guy?"

The more I thought about it, the more I realized that you know sometimes God has things in mind for us that we can't even imagine. And I think that maybe it was good for me to grow up being picked on a little bit, because then I realized what it meant to be kinda the underdog. And then to have someone who is not an underdog, someone who is you know like God or something to say, "Hey, I want you to be with Me." Then you kinda go, "Wow!" And so maybe for that reason, grace is more important to me than people who have been able to more self-sufficient and all that sort of thing.

BB: Speaking of God and your relationship with Him, there any other things that you enjoy writing about? There are certain times, certain periods of your life, in your relationship with Him that you like to put forth into your music?

RM: Well, I think, it's not a part of it that I particularly enjoy. A part that I find particularly spiritually vital is the emptiness of life, the utter futility of it. You know, I think a lot of people think it's morose when you sort of finally embrace that.

But I kinda go, once you come to understand that life is unbelievably brief, and that we really can't do anything that's gonna change anything. That we're sort of, that we don't really amount to a hill of beans. Then all of a sudden, you go, "So it doesn't really matter if I'm not great. And if I don't have to be great, that means I can fail. And if I can fail, that means I can try. And if I can try, that means I'm gonna have a good time." You know what I mean is? I mean I think it's the opposite... That the biblical approach to...

So many people at the end of the twentieth century in evangelical America have bought into the idea of believing in yourself and all that. Which I just kinda go, "Man, what would be more miserable

than if I really thought that I was my greatest hope?" And what is more liberating than realizing that I am not the greatest hope I have. That in fact, there is a hope that is so great, so far beyond me that except for His grace, I would never experience it.

And I kinda go, it seems to me like the world believes that we're supposed to esteem ourselves, but the teachings of Jesus are that we're supposed to forget ourselves. And I think once we realize what a little gnat you really are, you're easier to for get. And so then it's way easier to say, so it doesn't really matter if I don't hit the ball, I'm gonna swing. It doesn't really matter if I don't get the ball in the hoop, I'm gonna shoot anyway. It doesn't really matter if the song that I'm writing isn't any good, I'm gonna write it anyway.

Because even if it's a flop, tomorrow morning the sun's gonna come up just the same. Even if it's a flop Tomorrow evening it's gonna get darker and darker, chances are there will be stars. The world will go right on no matter whether I succeed or fail. So I am suddenly free in a world of amazing possibilities. I can try anything I want to try, because nothing is really at stake. And all this stuff we get caught up in, the idea of prestige, money, people recognizing you on the street. All those th ings become pretty secondary.

BB: Bring us up to date with your life and your career. You've recently kinda graduated college, as it were. Give us an idea of what's going on.

RM: Yeah, I think I was probably the oldest guy in my graduating class. And it was a blast to be in college. And now I've moved out to Arizona, and I'm living among the Navajo people there.

You know, a lot of people think I'm going out there to try to work with the Navajo people and save 'em. But actually, I'm going out there hoping they can save me somehow. Somehow by being among a people who force me to look at life in different terms than those I've grown comfortable with, somehow maybe I will see something that I've missed.

BB: How is that impacting your heart through your music and what God is doing in introducing you to those people in this stage of your life. How is that impacting your music?

RM: Music is one of those things that changes more slowly than the rest - you know, the music follows. So, all I can tell you is you need to keep listening to the stuff I'm writing, 'cause probably ten years from now, the effects of this will become noticable.

BB: Speaking of your music, one of my favorite songs is "Damascus Road," and I do understand that that came out of a painful time in your life. Give us an idea of that time as you wrote that song.

RM: Yeah, I wrote that right after my ex-fiance called off our engagement, and I just sort of did it as an act of obedience. Because I was going, you know you're supposed to.. The hebrew people were required to say, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord" when a tragedy happened. So I thought, well, you know I need to do something along those lines. So I decided to just thank God. It was sort of a writing exercise. But by the time I was over, what I realized was once again so often we think how our life is gonna go and what the Lord owes us and how it's supposed to be. And sometimes God has better things in mind or something different in mind for us than what we have in mind for ourselves.

And the job of the Christian, which is why writing is so much like praying, and why praying is so vital to a real Christian spiritual life. The job of a Christian is to keep themselves open to God and always recognize that God is greater than we are. And that nothing happens outside of His will. Some things He causes, some things He permits, and there's a whole lot of theology behind that that people love to argue about. I kinda go, the long and short of all of it is that if I believe that God is good, then I need to accept whatever happens to me in life as being a gift. And allow Him to take some of the things that hurt, allow Him to take some of the things that sting, some of the things that I think are going to kill me - allow Him to take those things and make of me the person He wants me to be. It may not be the person I want to be, but it'll be the person He would want me to be.

And I think when we realize who we are in Christ - when we mature in our identity as being His creature that we find that we're much more at home with ourselves in Him than we are in that false idea of

who we thought we were.

BB: Rich Mullins, thanks so much for being with us today.

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Agape Fest Seminar

Conducted by Rich Mullins on May 11, 1996

> *This is a synopsis of the seminar Rich Mullins gave at the Agape Music Festival on May 11, 1996 in Greenville, IL. It is my best recollection of what transpired, and my apologies to Mr. Mullins if I misrepresent him in any way. The lengthiness of this article can be partially attributed to Rich Mullins' wordiness, and partially to my own. Rich entered from the back of the room to enthusiastic applause. He was wearing a black sweater (it was chilly) with a tan t-shirt underneath, and baggy denim shorts. He had white socks & brown shoes, and had a tan. He told those in the back of the room to come up front and sit on the floor if they liked, so they could hear better (no microphones).*
>
> *He said he really didn't have a topic to speak about, so he'd make it a question and answer format. (The "official" topic in the program was "Music Ministry of Today.") He told us that he has an opinion about **everything** and that he sticks to his opinions whether or not he's right or has anything to back up his opinion. He also told us that if people take him too seriously, that's **their** fault. He told us that he's much less that who/what people think he is ... and much more as well. He said he'd go ahead and answer a few up front to save time. He grew up in Indiana, he doesn't know whether or not he's going to do another album, but that it's either that or get a real job.*
>
> *He said he doesn't really enjoy singing that much, and he has a theory on that. He said little boys go to music class and the music teacher sings really high, and then they get older and their voice begins to change and does really weird things, so they never feel comfortable singing. But then he joked that apparently he dislikes singing less than he dislikes hard work, so he might as well keep at it.*
>
> *The first question was something to the effect of: When did you first realize you were called into a music ministry? Rich elaborated for some time on this topic, went off on several related tangents, always came back to the subject at hand, but still covered a great deal of ground. I will attempt to cover as much of what he said as I can ... although I may not put it in the*

right place or remember all the questions that sparked the response.

First, the question seemed to annoy him some. (Rich was, in general, a little testy during the hour and a half he shared with us.) He told us that he thinks that we're all called to be who we are, and that we should all realize that we're called. Then he made a big point of the fact that he's not an evangelical and commented that he doesn't think evangelicals realize how far on the fringe of Christianity that they are.

He also commented on the CCM industry from a "ministry" standpoint. He said that no one knows anyone who really got saved because of a Christian concert, but that they got saved because they knew someone and saw Jesus in their life after this person became their friend and was real with them. He also touched on sin scandals in the CCM industry. He said that it didn't surprise him that these things happen - it surprised him that people are surprised that it happens!

He also said that when people talk about his songs being "inspired by God", that the Scriptures are inspired by God. God gave him a brain and he uses his brain to write songs and since that was what God created it to do, it pleases God. He commented that whatever it is that God created each one of us to do, when we do it, it pleases God. He compared it to listening to the new and upcoming bands earlier that day, and how everyone was dancing & enjoying the music and having fun, and that he thinks God looks down and that and says, "Hey, cool!" He said that he has been accused of having a "humanistic" viewpoint.

He said he finds it odd when people asked him what inspired him to write a particular song, because, whatever the song is about, that's what inspired it. He said if you can't tell what inspired the song, then he can't be a very good songwriter.

He also said he doesn't like it when people say, "that song was really anointed." He thinks they mean they just really liked that song. He said people will call him and tell him that God has called them into the music ministry, and ask him what they should do. He said, "If God's the one that called you, then call God, don't call me!" He said that when people say God called them to do something, it just means they really really want to do it themselves.

Someone else asked what he's reading right now, besides Brennan

Manning. He said, yeah, he likes to read Brennan Manning, and also that he likes to read a German theologian (whose name escapes me right now), but that it's difficult to read because it reads like a German theologian wrote it. He likes to read theology/church history. He mentioned that he'd been studying Roman Catholicism lately, but not that he was plugging Roman Catholicism.

He said what he likes about Roman Catholicism is that when they disciple, they encourage people to be like God, not to be like the one discipling them. IE. "go to the same bible study as me, go to the same church as me, read the same book as me..." He talked about people who try to change him, like telling him not to drink Diet Coke because it's bad for him, and he didn't ask for them to put their nose into his business in the first place.

He said that Alzheimer's runs in his family anyway ... He told how some friends of his were determined that he should speak in tongues, and laid hands on him and told him they wouldn't leave until he did ... so he finally just started saying, "praiseyoujesuspraiseyoujesuspraiseyoujesuspraiseyoujesus..." really, really fast so they'd leave him alone.

He said the church would be a lot better off if everyone knew their church history better and brought what was unique to their denomination to the whole. He then kind of "took roll" of mainline denominations....who here is Presbyterian? Methodist? Baptist? Rich: "Who started the Baptist church anyway? ... No, Ross started it in the U.S., but I think it was someone else before that." Quaker? "What, no Quakers? Oh, there's one! ALRIGHT!"

He said it's important to know what your denomination believes. He told a story about when he was a youth pastor, and a teenager came to him and asked him whether or not drinking was ok. Rich told the teenager to go to the pastor and ask him what the Methodists believe about drinking. The teen came back and said that they don't really have a stance on drinking. Then Rich told the teenager to go home and ask his parents how they feel about it.

He talked about his own beliefs a little, and how he "doesn't believe anything" about some things. He said he was filling out a ministry-type questionnaire that asked what he believes about faith healing, and he said he doesn't believe anything about that topic because he doesn't know. There was another topic he "didn't believe anything about," but I'm not sure

what it was.

He talked about peer pressure, and about a friend who he's had since about seventh grade who got into trouble with alcohol and stuff due to peer pressure. He said that now she's clean from all the alcohol stuff, and she lives like her parents wanted her to in the first place, which is what she had rebelled against as a teen. He commented that she's still being driven by peer pressure because she avoids alcohol, etc., by her involvement with 12-step groups (or some such).

He talked about when you're with people who are drinking alcohol if you don't drink it bothers them and how he can be happy with just cranberry juice. He also made a comment about teetotalers being just as bad (peer pressure) and how he's never met a teetotaler that was any fun.

*He spoke about peer pressure and how young people all think alike, dress alike, listen to the same music, etc., etc. He made a joke about having missed the meeting where everyone decided that goatees were "in". He very firmly spoke to the teens present and told them to remember, when they're tempted by peer pressure, that their parents **love** them and love them more than their friends ever will, and if they don't believe that they should mess themselves and see who cleans them up, their friends or their parents. He also commented that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft ... and since our country began with a rebellion we're all in trouble! Yet we celebrate the 4th of July - while we're all so worried about Halloween!*

He did actually get back to the subject of books. He said he had recently read a book by the author of "The World According to Garp." (Is that Irving? I forget.) He then cautioned anyone who decided to go out and read it not to blame him if they didn't like it. He said someone had asked him to recommend a book that was funny, and he did. They then wrote to him very upset because the book was offensive to them. He said they didn't ask him to recommend a book about morals, because he wouldn't have recommended that one because "it was filthy!" They had asked for a funny book, and it was "the most hilarious thing he had ever read," but that if you don't like to read coming of age/awakening sexuality, not to read that book.

He also said that if all anyone read were books about morals, they must have a very small library. He said that he has to be careful about what he reads because he tends to be cynical. He said he can't watch Monty Python / Holy Grail because if he feeds himself sarcasm he gets very harsh

and sarcastic.

He said that there were 2 children's books he really likes. I don't remember the first one. The second one is "The Rough-faced Girl," which is an Indian folk-tale variation of the basic Cinderella story. He said he thought it was Ojibwa (but I think it's Algonquin). He commented on folk-tales that are roughly the same in all cultures. In this particular version, the rough-faced girl (I believe she was burned, instead of just being dirty with cinders) says that she can see the invisible man, but no one, especially her sisters, believes her. She ends up marrying the invisible man. (I am really not doing this beautiful folk-tale any justice ... Rich did a fine job of telling it.)

He said that he had been approached about writing a book, but when he told them what it would be about, they changed their minds. He said he's always wanted to write a novel about a young man who is a gifted preacher as a young boy, like a prodigy. He gets the opportunity to travel with his idol, a well known and well loved famous preacher who is somewhat unethical. The boy travels with him and gets disillusioned, but continues in the ministry, gets married to someone that he loves dearly, but then she dies. Apparently he is pastoring by this time. The elders (or deacons, I forget which) are concerned about his "marital needs" and refer him to a blind prostitute. He starts to go to her, but can't go through with it, so he marries her. His church is outraged. Then he brings his new wife to a large church picnic, and she recognizes the voices of all the pastors and elders (or deacons) in all the churches in town. They kick him out, and he and his bride go out and live in the boonies, where he eventually finds God in a real and powerful way.

Rich then laughs, throws his arms up and says, "I don't understand ***why*** *they don't want to publish a story like this!"*

He said that he also has tendencies toward depression and has to take people with him when he travels. He said he's fine when he's around people, but after 3 or 4 months on the road, it's difficult for him. He said he gets all hyper after a concert and can't sleep, and then when the night's over, it's easy to get depressed.

He doesn't like to visit churches when he tours because it sometimes takes away from why people are there when they ask him for autographs at a service that he attends. He talked about why people choose their church, and that sometimes it's for the wrong reasons. He said that they had a

bunch of people come to his home church, and when they asked them why they came, it was because of their music program. Rich said, "We told them we didn't want them..." basically because they would move on when they found another music program they liked better. He also told teens not to complain if sometimes church is boring, because sometimes life is boring.

He commented that people also tend to read they same books of the Bible, and that everyone should go to where their Bible isn't underlined, which would probably include Song of Solomon and most of the minor prophets. The first two questions took the majority of the time up because Rich was given the opportunity to touch on so many topics. He was distracted a couple of times by a small boy (about 18 months old) who was wandering around the front and kept trying to go onstage with Rich. Rich just laughed and told the little boy to take advantage of it while he could, because before he knew it, everyone would be telling him what to do and he couldn't get away with stuff like this anymore. He also handed the little boy's mom a chalkboard that was nearby to try to help entertain the boy.

*Somewhere in all this he mentioned that he'd finally graduated from college (and got applause for that) and would be teaching at the Navajo Reservation in New Mexico. He said that he'd had to go out there and live for a year before teaching because so many people go out there and they just can't handle living in the desert and they leave after 6 months. They also told him that if he had any demons, he should get rid of them before he went out there. Rich then asked if he'd talked so long that he'd missed the set, then asked who else had questions. No one responded, and he said, "You mean I've answered **all** your questions?"*

Someone asked what kind of guitar strings Rich recommends. Rich said that he's a guitar "owner" not a guitar "player." He suggested that the guy start with a medium gage and work his way down to the finest gage that he's comfortable with. Someone asked what Rich thinks of Promise Keepers. Rich said, "It's about time!" He admitted to never having been to any Promise Keeper events, but he said the church needs strong men. He said he doesn't have anything against strong women because his mother & grandmother were strong women and they were very influential in his spiritual life. But that the church needs men's presence and participation.

Someone said he'd read that Rich has recorded on quote-unquote-secular releases under the name of "Moon Mullins." Rich laughed and said he

reads a lot of things about himself. He said he has a brother that they call Moon Mullins. He never did give either a yes or no answer to this question.

Someone asked what is his favorite song he's written. He said "Elijah..." then looked like he was about to elaborate, shrugged his shoulders, and said, "just because."

Someone asked about Rich's classes in college, and if he found theory classes boring. Rich said, no, that actually he really gets into theory.

Someone in the back asked him a question that had to do with being called into the music ministry, and Rich just looked at him in shock and said, "Uh... did you come in late or something?"

Someone asked, "For all the single women here, do you think you'll ever get married?" He laughed, and said, "I'm having so much fun single that I can't imagine having more fun being married, and by the time I'm ready to be married I'll probably be too old to be of any use to anyone." (He had commented several times earlier "in my 40 years", "in the 40 years I've been alive.")

*Someone asked what Rich thinks/how he feels when he hears himself on the radio. Rich said he rarely hears himself because he doesn't like to listen to music when he drives. I'm not sure, but I **think** he might have said something about preferring to listen to other things, but I'm not sure what he meant (talk radio? preaching?) He did comment that words are ideas, and that in the beginning was the Word and the Word became flesh, and we turn around and make it the (W/w)ord again ... I'm not sure if he meant that this was a good or a bad thing... He then, said, "But yeah, every once in a while I catch one of my songs and the radio and, yeah, it's kind of a blast."*

*I then raised my hand and asked Rich what musical artist he **does** listen to. I got flustered and stuttered, so he had to repeat my question back to me. He said he likes Bach, Mozart, some hammered dulcimer player whose name meant nothing to me. "...and the Chieftains." He said he likes Celtic music, too.*

*All in all, he shared a **lot** of information in about an hour and a half.*

His attitude was a little rough. IMHO, somebody must have set him off right

before he came in to speak with us. I have to admit that some people went away offended by what seemed to them anger and bitterness.

He had a very dry and biting sense of humor which a lot of people either missed or didn't appreciate. I was never sure when he was being serious, when he was daring us to take him seriously, or when he was just being flat-out ornery. There were times when I found him just hysterical, but no one else was laughing. (I'm not sure what that says about me...) It was almost like he walked into the place with the intent just to stir us up a little and prove to us that we have no idea who the real-life Rich Mullins is.

I know someone already spoke about the concert, but there were a couple of things I'd like to comment on. First of all, he came out while the comedian was leading a round of "Hallelu-hallelu-hallelu-hallelujah-Praise Ye the Lord." Rich walked up (sans sweater ... just the tan t-shirt, which read "shoeless"), took the microphone and said, "I know you were supposed to introduce me and everything, but ... here I am ... so ... Hi."

Rich took over and did the "Trinitarian" version of the song (in 3 parts). He also made us do all the standing up and sitting down like we did as kids.

It was cool and chilly during the set, and the clouds began to get thick and dark while Rich and his pal Mitch McVicker sang Dougie McClellan's "Ready for the Storm." It was a pretty cool effect. All in all, the set was much too short! He did comment on Beaker's absence, saying that he usually doesn't have people travel with him if they have families, unless their kids are older and stuff. He said that Beaker is doing "the Hebrew thing" (see Deuteronomy 24:5).

*After the concert Rich signed autographs in Agape's "Fan Tent." The line was very long and the mud was very deep. I got up to him and had all the inserts from my cassette tapes, and he looked at what I had, laughed, and said, "Wow, you've got a lot!" I told him he didn't have to sign all of them if he didn't want to... Rich said, "Well, the line **is** pretty long." My friend Brenda was with me. She grabbed one of them from me for him to sign for her, so I could have 2 autographs. I grabbed it back from her, and said, "No, not **that** one, **THIS** one!" Rich laughed at my obvious compulsiveness and said, "I like that!" I told him that I had had them in order (of my favorites, not release date). My friend Brenda then made me go behind the table and stand by Rich to get my picture taken with him. She twisted my arm and **made** me do it ... I swear she did! :) Rich leaned up against me*

and grinned really big, and Brenda took a very lopsided picture of me and Rich. Brenda shook his hand and said, "God bless you!" and I managed to stutter out a "Thank you."

Rich was in much better spirits during the concert, and was extremely patient and kind and personable during the very very long line for autographs. He looked a little tired, but kept a very genuine smile on his face the entire time. Brenda and I left while Rich continued to sign autographs and speak with fans...

Account by Kathie Scott (csmks@eiu.edu)

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The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine Interview

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Rich Mullins Interview
Brent Waters
The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine
April 1996

I first discovered Rich Mullins about ten years ago, and he rattled my cage. It kind of ticked me off at first - I mean, the guy made me think, for goodness sake! Who did he think he was?! His music conveyed the truth in such a way that I could no longer take it for granted. His lyrics often stood in direct opposition to my comfortable Christian clichés, and upon close examination, I saw that the clichés were wrong.

Little changed in ten years. Through albums, concerts, and conversations, Mullins continued to encourage believers to move beyond the bounds of their familiar, traditional thinking, to open themselves up to see God in a whole new light, to find Him in places they'd never expect. He extended this challenge to himself as well. In the fall of 1996, he began looking for God on a Navajo reservation, teaching music to Native American children.

Sadly, for those who loved Mullins and his music (but happily, for Rich), the God whom he sought took him home to be with Him a year later. During that last year, he continued to record and tour as time permitted, in order to support himself in his work on the reservation. In a small group discussion in Atlanta during the Brother's Keeper Tour, he commented, "I have to laugh sometimes when people refer to this music thing as my 'ministry.' I don't consider it a ministry; I consider it my tent-making."

During that discussion, he spoke of the time that he had already spent on the reservation in preparation for his teaching. He confessed that he had a lot to learn, both culturally and spiritually, as God began to make him think. For instance, the Navajo people prize silence, so Mullins had been trying to learn that discipline. He said that he had discovered that it's very easy to just "tune out" and not listen for God's voice when we surround ourselves with music or other sounds. But with nothing to distract you, it gets hard to drown out even a still, small voice.

When I spoke with Mullins at GMA Week '96 in Nashville, I started by asking him about the time that he had spent on the reservation since the Brother's Keeper Tour.

Brent Waters: How has the acclimation process gone lately?

Rich Mullins: The more I try to acclimate, the more I find out I've got a lot of acclimatin' to do. But there are a number of really good things. One is [that] they have a whole different concept of time on the reservation than we do. Like, eight o'clock means whenever we get the sheep put up. Saying "I'll meet you at 8 in the morning," means, "I'll meet you sometime early in the morning," and "early in the morning" all depends on what time I got up. It's called time-appropriateness. Most of us Anglos go by the clock. Out there, it's much more a matter of "now is the time to do this because it's appropriate. Now it's time to put the sheep up." So, that's real different.

Another thing that I'm learning is that a lot of times when you go to the reservation, you think, "Man, this is really trashy looking." Our Anglo aesthetics all have to do with our ability to manipulate our environment. On the reservation, the aesthetic has a lot more to do with, "How can I adjust myself to this environment? How do I place myself in the least disruptive way?" It's really cool, especially since I live in a trailer, which is really different for me. It's not that I grew up rich or anything; it's just that I never thought of a trailer as a pleasant-looking place. I'm a good Midwesterner - I want a good foundation, I want a basement, the whole bit. So now, I'm going, "How can I make this a cooler place?" By being there, my thinking has changed a little to, "How can I learn to live in the space I've been given without tearing everything up? How do I learn to love sand blowing around instead of having grass?" That's part of the fun part of acclimating. So, that's a couple of the things I've been learning that I think have been really good for me spiritually.

BW: I can imagine that the lessons sometimes just leap out at you, with the contrast there from what we're used to.

RM: Yeah. That's the fun thing of putting yourself in the midst of another culture. All the things you take for granted, all of a sudden you realize, "Well, maybe not everybody in the world thinks the same way as I do." And then you also realize, "Maybe I'm not right about everything," and then you also begin to realize how unique and how wonderful our own set of hang-ups are.

It was never interesting to me that brides wore white until I went to Asia where they wear red. And then all of a sudden, I went, "Wow, what is this?" And then, talking to the people, you find out the reason they wear red is because it has to do with fertility. That's a very high value, or at least it used to be, in Asian culture. Just the same as white has to do with purity, which at one time was a value in Western culture. So, even though we don't have the same values we used to have, we still have the same colors we use at weddings. So, I think that's really interesting. Then you go to a wedding and you think, "Man, what an exotic thing that they dress their brides in white."

[Or in another situation, you think,] "What an exotic thing to have a bed, because most

people in the world don't. And, when you live in a culture where everybody sleeps on a bed, you take it for granted - this is so normal and so hum-drum. Then you go somewhere, and you begin to realize that only a very small percentage of people in the world sleep on beds. You think, "Why do we have whole rooms devoted to sleeping in our homes, when for most people, sleeping is sort of an incidental thing?"

BW: Wow. After that, talking about a new album just kind of pales in comparison.

RM: [In mock haughtiness] Not my new album, man. My new album is very exciting.

BW: You have a "best of" in the works?

RM: Yes.

BW: I heard there was consideration given to going with two volumes.

RM: There was, but we decided not to, because we just did that two-volume thing a while ago, and it's just so huffy. At some point, you kind of go, "That's a little pompous." I think it's embarrassing. Plus, I'm not really sure I have two albums worth of songs that merit being called the best. [Laughter]

I think the "best of" idea is really silly, because I've never put a song on an album that I didn't think was my best one. Everyone asks, "Do you have a favorite [song]?" Well, whatever song I'm working on at the moment is my favorite.

But, the criteria we decided to go with for selecting songs for the album was just what songs have done really well on the radio, because that's some indication of how people have responded to a song; but that's certainly not the only indication. If I was going to do an album of my own favorites, there would probably only be a few songs off of this album that would make it. Awesome God would not be on that particular.... No, I think maybe Awesome God would be. [Laughter] You know, the thing I like about Awesome God is that it's one of the worst-written songs that I ever wrote; it's just poorly crafted.

But the thing is that some times, I think, that when you become too conscientious about being a songwriter, the message becomes a vehicle for the medium. This is a temptation that I think all songwriters have. I think a great songwriter is someone who is able to take a very meaningful piece of wisdom - or of folly or whatever - and say it in a way that is most likely to make people respond. But, what you want them to respond to is not how cleverly you did that; what you want them to respond to is your message. Boy Like Me, Man Like You is an example of a song where we were talking about the incarnation, and Jesus Himself - what a hard thing. Even having grown up in the church - in spite of periods of rebellion (which have been interspersed throughout life, not only in

adolescence) - that's something I still am bamboozled by. How is Jesus fully human and fully divine - fully, fully two things? It was the idea of how do we communicate something that is important, but something that we don't even grasp? That's how Boy Like Me, Man Like You was written.

You don't normally sit down when you write a song and say, "I think I'm going to write a song on the end times. "Generally, your main job as a writer is to remain open to the moment. So, if you want to be a writer, you necessarily have to be an existentialist. A lot of people think you can't be a Christian and an existentialist. I don't think you can be a Christian any other way. But, that's why a lot of people think I'm a liberal. Well, they'll have to get over it.

BW: Can you think of a song that you'd pick that won't be on [the "best-of" album]?

RM: I love the song Bound To Come Some Trouble. A lot of people even freak out that I would say that. They would go, "You are way conceited." But, it's a lot of work to write a song. Why would I go to all that bother to write something I didn't like? Any writer that tells you, "Oh, I don't like that song," is lying through their teeth. Of course they like it; otherwise, if you don't like a song, you don't finish it. Or you finish it and you go, "I don't like it, but this is a good line," so, you steal it and use it in a different song. So, false humility is one of the ugliest things in the world, I think.

BW: I read that you're also going to do Sing Your Praise to the Lord the way you intended it.

RM: Yeah. Well, I always make a joke. But I have to say - you know, I'm not a fan of a lot of people, but I really like Amy Grant - and I love that she did that song, and I even like the way she did it. The way she did it is really enthusiastic. That's another example of a song that is not well-written. If someone sent me a demo tape and that was on there, I would go, "Wow, this is a really young person." But, that's another reason I wanted to record it myself. At one time I was so much younger and I wasn't so interested in being a good writer. One day I was working on a Bach fugue, and I just didn't want it to end - Sing Your Praise came out of all that. That's why, in its original version [laughter], it was about seven minutes long, because I just kept going. I was just hoping if maybe I resurrected that song, I'd resurrect something of myself I've lost in the course of these ten years, or however long I've been at this. I don't even know how long I've been at this.

BW: The question several years ago was, "Who is this 'Beaker' guy?" I think the question soon will be, "Who is this 'Mitch' guy?"

RM: Mitch and I met at Friends University. We were in one of James Smith's classes

together, and we were in a discussion group. It's not like I was looking for someone to work with. But, there were a lot of qualities in him that I thought were very complementary for me. I tend to be very chattery (as you've noticed), kind of uptight, kind of nervous. I wouldn't say I'm high-strung, because people generally say, "Man, you look like you're in a coma." But, it's just because there's all this internal junk going on. I mean, I'm in the midst of a hurricane here, so I can't be real attentive to what's "outside."

Mitch was just this basketball player who happened to be in this religion class I was in. I thought he was very cool, but I had no idea he had any musical ability at all. One day, I was in this [other] guy's room; there were a bunch of us sitting around. Mitch came in and someone said, "Hey, play a song," and I was blown away that this guy played guitar. And, not only did he play guitar, but he has a great voice - which I don't have, so I could use a good voice on my show. He's a really young writer, but he's a good writer. He has some very good thoughts. So, when we graduated, we decided that it was time to take our first novitiate into our order. So, that's Mitch. I think he needs to wear a T-shirt that says, "I Am Not Beaker," because everybody goes, "Oh, you must be Beaker."

BW: That order [to which you referred] is "The Kid Brothers of Saint Frank"?

RM: Yeah. The most non-evangelizing order in the world. [Laughter] We don't want new members. It's really just sort of a joke. But, every now and again it strikes us as something very amazing that we're only toying with.

Beaker and I both first got really interested in religious orders. I had read a book called Exploring Spiritual Direction by Alan Jones. That whole evangelical discipleship thing really turned me off, as most evangelical things do. I was just so depressed from meeting all these kids that were turning into caricatures of great old men or great old women, these great saints. People were thinking [that] the way to become spiritual is to imitate the lives of really spiritual people. Well, in Catholicism, spiritual direction is something like discipleship, only their idea is that you don't become like me, you become like you. In Catholicism - and this is one of the places in which Catholicism is much more appealing to me than Protestantism, and certainly more than Evangelicalism - our identity as being a creature, as being someone uniquely created, is much more "in your face" than in Protestantism. Protestantism is kind of like "Christianity lite" to me. It's kind of like we want to be Christians, but we really take science more seriously than we take Christianity. We take what we think we know more seriously than what we believe. And I think there is nothing more useless to me than what we now know, because tomorrow we're going to "now" know something completely different and contradictory.

I think it would be ridiculous to say that we live solely by faith and that reason doesn't have anything to do with faith. But, your reason grows out of your faith, and if your faith is

in the ideas of the enlightenment - which Protestantism, I think, is kind of saddled with that - then your reason will grow out of your faith. And the ideas of the enlightenment are that anything that is true is also scientifically verifiable. Well, any imbecile can tell you that that is not the case.

In spiritual direction, the idea is that God purposed you into this world, that there is a purpose that is unique, and that you have an identity that is unique, and it is sacred to God. That's one of my favorite things. The whole thing in Revelation about "what will be given to he who overcomes." One of the things that will be given to those who overcome is a white stone with a name, known only to God and the person to whom the stone belongs. You know, I'm not a big believer in proof-texting, because I think you can go to the Bible and prove anything you want. Even Jim Jones could prove his points from the Bible. But, somehow that speaks to me in a - once again - existential way. Ihate to use that term because I'm not one of those guys, but in terms of what becomes relevant and incorporated into our person, this verse says to me, "God knows who I am; I don't."

In Exploring Spiritual Direction, Alan Jones talked about the idea of spiritual direction which is from the Catholic tradition. In that, your spiritual director basically helps you sort through our own idea of who we are, to get past that and to come to experience ourselves as God created us, and as God thinks we are, which would be the equivalent of holiness. To be who we are created to be would be to be holy. In this book, he talked about the three traditional monastic vows - poverty, chastity, and obedience. This was mind-blowing to me. Because growing up Protestant, I always thought of a monastery as a place where cowards went, people who can't deal with the world. When you really begin to research some of this stuff, you find out that these are some of the bravest people. Anyone who decides to face themselves head on is a very brave person. That's where some of the roots of our interest in monasticism came. Also in the movie - and granted, it's a Hollywood thing - Brother Son, Sister Moon. "When I saw that thing, man, I wanted to be Francis of Assisi.

Did that answer your question? Did you even ask a question?[Laughter] It's dangerous to interview me! I never know where I'm going.

BW: [Fortunately, Mullins had answered several of my questions. It just took me awhile to figure out which ones, and to cross them off my list. Our conversation wandered a bit before returning to the topic of St. Francis.]

RM: I think a lot of people have never heard of Francis of Assisi, or they think of him as some ecology nut or some eccentric wacko from the 12th century who was cute and endearing. Actually, when I think of revolutionary characters in the history of the rise of Western culture (or whatever you want to call that), Francis of Assisi was a major, major

player. The thing that was so dynamic about him was not that he preached to birds - although he did, and that's a wonderful part of who he was. It's not that he lived in utter poverty, although that's an interesting part of who he was. The thing, I think, that filled his life so much that it changed poetry, it changed our ideas of social justice - I think much of our ideas about social justice have been influenced by the Franciscans - I think the dynamic in his life was not his ideas, or even his order or even the rule of his order. But the dynamism came from [the fact] that here was a man that really fell in love with Jesus, and that was the all-pervading power in his life. For all the jazz about "I love Jesus and Jesus loves me," if this is the case, why do our lives look so.... How can you be in love with Jesus and be so boring? You know what I mean?

Because, you know, when you fall in love with somebody, you get this rush and you stay up all night, you party all day, you go to work and you feel great. You've got this, like a chemical rush. Man, to be in love with the Almighty - maybe not a chemical rush like when we fall in love with other people - but if it happens in a spiritual realm, isn't that even more powerful? So, I don't buy all this jazz when people say, "Well, I just love Jesus." The problem is that none of us really love anything or anyone except ourselves. ["I love Jesus" is] a very bold thing to say. How would you or I love Jesus? We're incapable of love unless He gives us the ability to do that. Looking at Francis, here is a man who allowed God to make him a great lover, which would be a wonderful thing to be. So, we're using Francis as a model of someone who really fell in love. Somebody for whom, like Jesus said, "My bread is to do the will of the Father." I think that happened to Francis; I don't think it happens to many other people.

The cool thing is one big Franciscan value is the idea of community. That's why it's a blast to have [Mitch and Beaker working with me], because it feels like a community if there are more than two people involved. When it's just two people involved, it's just like a good friendship. But with three people, it begins to take on the shape of a community.

BW: [Our conversation wandered again, and we came upon the fact that, like Mullins, my wife was to begin teaching in the fall. Unlike Mullins, she teaches high school math. Or maybe not so unlike Mullins....]

RM: Well, music is applied math. That's all it is. It cracks me up when people make this whole spiritual to-do out of it. Yeah, it's spiritual in the same sense that baking a cake is spiritual. Everything is spiritual. Which is another hang-up I have with Protestantism, and even more specifically with Evangelicalism. It's more like Manicheism than anything else. This dualistic system that says that everything physical is evil, and the only good things are spiritual things. And I go, "Wow! John wrote a good bit of what he wrote to counter that kind of thinking." And yet, all these Bible-believing, Bible-thumping born-again-ers are going around professing the very thing that John tried to put out.

BW: [Our conversation wandered once more - big surprise - and then turned to the subject of authors.]I know you really dig G. K. Chesterton. You turned Carolyn [Arends] and me onto him. We were discussing Orthodoxy earlier today. Other than Chesterton and Jones (who you mentioned earlier), are there any other authors you've come upon recently that you really like?

RM: Well, I'm still a big Brennan [Manning] fan. In fact, I'm so excited because he came to visit me today. So, when we're done, I'm going to take off with him and go get a great big sloppy dessert.

You know, I haven't run into any new authors lately. There are so many good writers, it's just amazing. I did read Joan Of Arc by Mark Twain. This is what I love about reading: I read Joan Of Arc, and I didn't have any idea who the Palladins were, and so they're talking about the Palladins and then this friend of mine said, "You need to read the Iliad and the Odyssey. "Man, I tried to read that at one point and it was so dry, I thought I was going to puke. So he said, "You just need to read an epic poem; you just need to do that if you want to go to Heaven." So, I decided I'd read Song Of Roland, because I knew that was a piece of writing that Lewis loved. So, I read the Song Of Roland, and I found out who the Palladins were! Here's this connection. Here we are in the Dark Ages, and Christendom is trying to get on its feet, and then I read this book called How The Irish Saved Civilization, which is a little known fact. The Irish had a major contribution between the time Rome fell and the time Europe was on its feet. So, all that was really interesting. It was really fun to read some of European history, because you know, being out in "Navajo-land," it's not something that comes up real prevalent in conversation. It was fun to look at that again. And, it just makes you want to read, "how did we go from there to here," which is the fun thing about reading.

In terms of new authors I'm really big on, I just can't think of any. I am meeting more people who will admit that they don't like Doestoyevsky, so I feel so good about that. [Laughter] Man, I have tried. I would like to be in with the literati, but if I have to read that to be there, I'll just stay out. I don't get it. There are moments that are brilliant, but then the rest of it... I know that I'm just too dumb to get it because all the writers that I like love Doestoyevsky. Someone said, "Well, you need to read it in Russian." Right. Maybe in another life.

BW: I think that's it. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

RM: [Laughing] Nope. I have no interest in divulging any more information than I already have. If you can't hang me with what I already gave you, there just ain't enough rope in the world.

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CCM Magazine Article

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O, to Be Rich
Joy Is a Very Enduring Quality
For Rich Mullins, joy has flown over his life and left an immutable mark
James Long
CCM Magazine
November 1995

The sky really is a deeper, more vivid blue. It is gigantic-a great canopy of cloud-dotted color and light and drama, overarching the barren Southwestern terrain. The sky! Vast! The sun, like an unclenched fist, spreads fingers of dry heat across the desert floor below.

Take Highway 40 west out of Albuquerque, on the upper Rio Grande. You will pass seven extinct volcanoes, the seemingly endless stretch of sage, piñon trees, and majestic red-rock formations--eventually you will come to the trailer Rich Mullins now calls home. Behind it, a small valley stretches between two mesas, each running five or ten miles in length. Such is the stark beauty of central New Mexico, home to a Navajo nation and an iconoclastic musician.

Rich was drawn here, pulled away from his Wichita, Kansas home by the natural wonder of the Southwest - and by the people. It has been his dream to live among the Navajo and to share the gifts of music and faith.

At the moment, however, Rich is not under the vast Southwestern sky. He is confined to a rented facility in downtown Nashville, where he is rehearsing his band to tour in support of his recent release, Brother's Keeper (Reunion). Something truly amazing happens when musicians come together to make music live--a magic that cannot be replicated by endlessly laying down one track upon another in a studio. The band breaks for dinner and Rich settles down to discuss music, his spiritual pilgrimage, and the influences that have shaped him.

"The thing that's cool about music is how unnecessary it is," Rich says with characteristic candor. "Of all things, music is the most frivolous and the most useless. You can't eat it, you can't drive it, you can't live in it, you can't wear it. But your life wouldn't be worth much without it."

Rich speaks of the soundtracks that play in his mind as he drives and of the challenge to capture such musical ideas so he can work with them. He speaks of the serendipitous

things that happen as you create, alone or in a group. The sense that something wonderful has transpired. The challenge to recreate the moment.

Of course, music that truly captivates us involves much more than intervals and scales and chord progressions; melodies, harmonies, rhythms; guitars, drums, keyboards or hammer dulcimers. Music that touches us and stirs us deeply involves these mechanics, but it is really about those things which reach the soul. It is about ideas. It is about life.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning Southern author James Agee once said that if he was looking for great literature, he would read grocery lists. His point was, everyone's caught up saying things in some cute and clever way. A writer's job is really just to say what's there. Saying what's there, painting the landscape of life, has become Rich Mullins' passion. In the process, he has learned that there are some things that encumber the process or obstruct the view. Cynicism, for instance.

"I came to Nashville more than a decade ago with a chip on my shoulder. I was going to be the Nashville bad boy. I was not going to be your typical run-of-the-mill, Pollyanna, goody-two shoes Christian musician. I became so boring trying to be bad that I gave up the pursuit."

Cynicism had clouded and limited his perception. "A lot of people think you can either be cynical or you can be sentimental. I think you have to reach beyond both of those. I read Proverbs all the time now because I would like to be wise just for a few years before I become senile. But wisdom doesn't lie in cynicism or sentimentalism. A wise person isn't either of those things, and wisdom doesn't look like what either of them has to offer. I remember thinking, 'God please save me from this cynical spirit, because I'm going to become such a nasty old man.' I like grumpy old men-kind-hearted but grumpy-but I don't like nasty old men. I don't like people who are genuinely mean-spirited. And I didn't want to become one."

Realize: as Rich embarked on a Christian music career a decade ago, he was just emerging from more than 10 years of darkness. "From my junior year of high school until age 30, I felt tormented all the time. I didn't like myself, and I didn't like anybody who was around me. Part of the reason it was so dark was it was dull. I would think maybe I should experiment with this or that, and I would. Invariably, it was a letdown. I'd hear testimonies about deliverance from drugs and I thought, 'What wonderful things drugs must be if a person is willing to destroy their life in order to have them.' Then I remember being very disappointed with my own little experiments. Whatever it was that people seemed to get out of it, I didn't get it. I never had to be delivered from a life of drugs or whatever because I didn't want in it. There was nothing there for me."

During this time, however, Rich's faith also seemed empty. "I never tried to be an atheist. That never made much sense to me. I knew I wouldn't make a good atheist. But I do remember thinking I just wouldn't have anything to do with God. Yet, even then, I felt driven back to God. I wanted intimacy with Him."

Like most of us who find our way, it was a series of many small steps, scarcely remembered later, that brought Rich home. What we do recall more vividly, are those points at which we make an abrupt change of direction-the dramatic turns we take that keep those small steps headed in the right direction. Rich was about 30 when he confronted the power of a secret sin and found a greater power in confession.

"I was in Michigan, on my way to somewhere where I knew I ought not to be going. I started praying, 'Oh God, why don't you just make my car crash so I won't get there because I can't stop myself.' I remember thinking that He said, 'Yeah, you're right. You can't.' I said, 'Why can't I? What I'm doing makes me sick.' And it was as if God responded, 'Yes, what you do makes me sick too, but what you are makes me sicker. You do what you do, because you are what you are. You can't do otherwise.'"

At that moment, facing himself honestly, Rich Mullins concluded that he was sick. At the same time, he remembered the words of Scripture. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). That recollection was intermingled with James 5:16. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed." The idea was forceful. Could this be the answer to his inner anguish?

"I thought, I'm just going to stop and confess to the first preacher I see. The first church I go by, I'm going in there and I'm going to tell everything. And I remember thinking, 'No, that's not what it means. Confession has to be something other than just saying words. It must be something more than just owning up to what you've done, even though that's a big part of it. I need to tell this to people whose opinion is most important to me.'"

At that time, Rich had three or four friends in Cincinnati so he immediately drove from Michigan to Ohio. He didn't stop until he met with those friends and confessed his struggle.

"It was one of the most liberating things I have ever done. It's not like I haven't been tempted since that time. It's not that I don't still deal with the same sorts of things. I still have to make right choices. I still have to flee temptation. But the power of that sin was broken."

Gradually, the oppression Rich had felt lifted, like a flower slowly opening or a smile

spreading across a face. It is this sense a wonder and hope and deepening intimacy with God that Rich would like to leave imprinted across his music and his life.

"I would hope that when someone comes in contact with me or my music that they would be caught in a sense of wonder. Not that they would have a sense of wonder, but that a sense of wonder would possess them. And I would hope that they would be enveloped with a sense of joy. Joy is a very enduring quality. If it ever flies over you, it does change you forever."

It has certainly changed Rich - in both his worlds. The world of the road, the concerts, the recordings. The world that is now his home, the prospect of seeing the face of a Navajo child lit by love and faith and wonder.

And it's there, hundreds of miles west of Nashville, that sunset's coolness settles over the desert floor. The sky dims to cobalt blue, deep purple, jet black, stabbed by a million suns. A vast, dark sky bleeding light. Constellations slowly cartwheel across the night sky. Moonlight paints the sage and desert floor in shades of blue. Shooting stars arc above, tearing the fabric of space.

Joy is flying overhead.

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Brother's Keeper Radio Special Transcript

kidbrothers.net/interviews/brothers-keeper-radio-special-95.html

Brother's Keeper Radio Special
1995
Voice: "Welcome to the Rich Mullins Brother's Keeper Radio Special"

[Brother's Keeper fades in and then out...]

Radio Disc Jockey: We're here with Rich Mullins. We're going to be talking about the Brother's Keeper record, his eighth album, actually, on Reunion. And we'll be chatting a little bit, too, about the upcoming Brother's Keeper Tour which is going to be going Coast to Coast, all over the United States of America. You're actually going to be doing this thing right this time, huh, hitting almost every state in the Union, I think. You went up to Alaska?

RM: Yeah, but you say that like we haven't done it right before...

DJ: No, you have done it before. Nobody's (I don't think) toured more than you, but it just seems like...no, I'd better not say that. I was gonna say, it seems like we had two final tours, and then...

RM: (laughs) Yes, this is the third in a series of "Farewell Tours". (laughs again) Yeah, I think there's more energy behind this tour. Touring is a blast for me. You know, for several reasons. 'Cause one, I hate making my bed, and I love sleeping in a bed that's been made. So you never have to make your bed and you always have clean sheets. And you only get that in a hotel. You certainly don't get that at home. I like that about it. I also like...you know, a lot of people will say "when you're on tour, how do you get any quiet time?" Which, you know, you spend the majority of your time traveling from one place to the other, and I always travel in such a way that it's very quiet. There are no phones in the Jeep, there's no tv, we don't hardly ever play the radio or tapes or anything like that. And whoever rides with me in the Jeep generally are pretty quiet. So you have tons of quiet time. That's a real valuable thing to me.

DJ: Let's jump to the record just a little bit. Cause, I mean, it's the Brother's Keeper Tour, the name of the album. Very cool name for a record, because I think it's been on everybody's mind, and yet I've heard that phrase my whole life. And yet, I've never known a Christian record that had that title. By now, you'd think someone would have already thought of it.

RM: I'll bet someone has.

DJ: But they never did it!

RM: Yeah. I just never find anything that I've ever done that someone hasn't done before, and probably done better.

DJ: But it's so simple compared to some of your other titles of your records. (Rich laughs) It seems like, why did he name it that? And this is so simple.

RM: Well, we were just gonna call it Songs. Because I thought that would be a really funny joke, but then no one else thought it was very funny.

DJ: Just Songs would have been the original title?

RM: Yeah, because of all the other titles having been so long, I thought, "That would be funny just to call it Songs." But no one else got the joke, so we decided not to make a joke out of the title and we called it Brother's Keeper. But we had some other interesting titles. We thought about calling it Too Many Chiefs and Not Enough Native Americans. You know, kind of poking fun at whatever we could.

DJ: Well, since people listening to this can't see the record, there's some very cool artwork on there.

RM: Yes. And what makes it even cooler is that it was done by Jimmy Abegg, who's also in the band. So it's kind of a real in-house kind of record. We didn't hire background singers, we had to wives of the guys sing for background. And it was kind of a blast. This record was fun to make because, instead of hiring background singers - and in the past, I've worked with some amazing and wonderful people - but this time, it was much more of a family kind of thing. Three of the guys, two or three of them just had kids. Yeah, three of them just had kids right before we made the record, so while we're doing the background vocals, you know, with the mothers of these children, we're having to take breaks for nursing and breaks for this and breaks for that. So it was more of a family kind of project. It was for me, a real blast.

DJ: It's also the first album you basically produced yourself. I mean, Reed did not produce this one. That's very interesting, I think, to a lot of people, when you see "Produced by Rich Mullins," etc. They wonder, "Is this gonna sound different?"

RM: I think it does sound different. But that's part of it. You know, one of the things I've always wanted to do was to be a part of a band. And this is another step closer to being a part of a band. I hope that on the next Ragamuffin album that it's more band-y than this. So, we're kind of moving in a direction that I kind of like.

DJ: It is a fun sounding record. It really is. It has a lot of energy to it, some great songs. And album with a title of Quoting Deuteronomy to the Devil somewhere in there, you know it's gonna be a fun record. Rich, the phrase "brother's keeper" - has that been rolling around in your head for awhile?

RM: Um...boy, I don't know. I used to live with James Brian Smith and his wife Megan and their little boy Jacob, and he's a writer and one of the things he writes about - he just finished a book called Embracing the Love of God. And one of the things that he wrote about, and so we talked about a lot as I was living there, was the whole idea of loving each other, and how do you do that, and where does that all come from? And Beaker came over one evening and we were sitting out on the porch, and he went, "OK, I've got this little thing going" and he showed me this little guitar thing, and it just sounded like this song. I mean, it sounded like this lyric. And we wrote it fairly quickly there on Jim's porch.

[Brother's Keeper]

RM: We love things because we allow ourselves to be attracted to them. And that's, I think, the place where a good many of us are. We love nothing because we're too busy criticizing it, or we have learned to love things because they've attracted us to them. And I think the third place, which I think is the place where Christ is, is you love things because you have love in you. It has nothing to do with the object. Love is then a force, and love itself compels you to involve yourself with other people an other things. Does that make sense?

DJ: It makes perfect sense.

RM: And so, that's the place I think we all want to get to, and I think the lyric that a lot of people have asked us about, because we've played it live and stuff, and people go "What do you mean, I won't regard someone for their strength?" And that cut goes back to that thing, of saying... You know, I'm not that way. This is my ideal. (laughs) I'm still hung up on people's weaknesses and on their strengths. I still love something because it's attractive to me, rather than love something because love is in me and it demands an object. But if we despise someone for their weakness and we admire them for their strength, then we're still missing the person. It's the weakness or the strength that's getting our attention. And the person behind the strengths and the person behind those weaknesses is cut out of the picture. When we learn to see people for what God has created there, rather than for what they have made out of what God created there, then, I think we're more likely to love them. And so, the lyric "I won't despise him for his weakness, I won't regard him for his strength," that's where that kind of comes from. I guess that's a lot of where we we're at, is the realization that love is not something that I can conjure up out of myself, I don't go in a room and get myself hyped up to love somebody. That love seems to have an energy all

of its own. And I do my best, when I get out of the way of it and I allow it to use me for its own ends.

DJ: Well, that's always been one of your strengths, with your songs. (Rich chuckles) Looking back, to the very first record, the songs that really touched people are the ones that made them say, "That's exactly what I'm saying. I just can't make it rhyme, I just can't put it down on a sheet of paper." When people really identify with that, and a lot of stuff that you're talking about, those same thoughts come up, like, "Yeah, I just have to love them. I don't have to judge them." And you manage to get all that into 3 1/2 minutes with a great-sounding song, and that's a true gift.

RM: I think one of the things - the writers that I really like, when I sit down and look at, "Why is this a really good song?" It's either because it's a great story, brilliantly told, and what makes a great story are things like irony, humor, something very human, very tender...vulnerability...those kinds of things make story-songs good. But songs that are less a story-song and more a subject song or an issue-song, it's because a lot of times we feel the need to apologize for everything we think. We feel the need to defend our thoughts, rather than just say them. One of the wonderful things about Carl Barth's whole thing about preaching is, he said, "preaching is not so much me telling you what I think about what the Scriptures say. Preaching, good biblical preaching, is simply a proclamation of the Good News." And so often in Christianity, we're trying to make Christianity more attractive. John Fisher said one of the most profound things I've ever read. He said...I can't remember the exact quote, but something along the lines of "Why be cute when you are beautiful?" And I think a lot of our energy as Christians, we're trying to make Christianity more appealing to people when Christianity is the most naturally appealing thing in the world. What is more appealing than the idea that we can be loved? What is more appealing than the idea that we will be given the power to love? What is more appealing than the idea that we can experience peace in the midst of turmoil? What is more appealing than all of these things? Rather than trying to become propagandists, when we simply become people of God, when we are simply what He made us to be, then people will be drawn, rather than our trying to figure out some cool way to present Jesus that will trick people into being believers. You can't be tricked into the Kingdom of God.

[Let Mercy Lead fades in and out...]

RM: You know, a lot of people are hung up about being single, or being married, or whatever. And that's why I think community is a great thing, because I have the great advantage of being able to vicariously experience the joys of marriage, through watching my friends who are married. You get some of the crumbs under the table. One of the things that's been really wonderful for me is that Julie and Beaker had a baby. They had Aidan. And it's just amazing to me, from the time that Aidan was born, if I was visiting with

Beaker, we'd be in the middle of some great discussion, and he would suddenly jump up, run across the room and rub Aidan's head and come back and carry on the conversation. It was like he couldn't wait to touch him. He couldn't wait to see him. That love that a father has for his child was just so much a part of his being that he couldn't keep his hands off him. He couldn't keep himself away from him. A guy once told me that someone told him that you could never really understand John 3:16 until you became a father. That you couldn't really know what it meant to give your only begotten son until you really had a son. And I think in a sense that's true. I think that's so far beyond my experience that when I try to think of what did it really cost God to redeem me, I really can't imagine; I can't really measure that. But having a friend who's married and has a kid, it's a blast to see: this is the kind of a love that a father has for his son, or for his daughter, or a mother has for her son or her daughter.

And so, before [Aidan] came out of the womb, Beaker wanted to write a song for him, and we worked and worked and worked. And you know, we write songs all the time, but it was so amazing and so wonderful to see how careful he was about everything he wanted to say to Aidan in this song. I mean, really, it was intense, kind of. And we wrote and threw away so many songs that I thought were pretty good. But they weren't good enough for his kid. And we finally finished it up. I had a teepee that a friend of mine gave me, and we went out in the teepee to spend a day. I think when you're writing, sometimes there's a great advantage in taking yourself and putting yourself in a whole different environment, some kind of seclusion. Something quiet. So we were out there in the teepee and that's when we actually finished the song. I'm not sure exactly the things that came together to make this one click and make Beaker go, "Yeah, that's the song that I want for my son. That's what I want him to grow up with."

But one of the things that struck me was, when I think of when God wanted to reveal Himself to me, when God wanted to speak to me, how - He spoke through the prophets, and He spoke in different ways. He speaks to us through nature, and He finally spoke through Jesus. Which is a perfect revelation of Himself. Jesus is an extension of God. And this song, I helped write it, but I think it's more of an extension of Beaker than it is something that I wrote and it's just cool to think of how much care a person takes saying something to someone they really love.

DJ: When Aidan made his guest appearance, when he vocally inserts himself in there...honestly, I know people probably asked you this before. Was that him crawling around in the studio, or he just wanted to be on it, did Beaker want him to be in on it?

RM: No, Beaker wanted him to be in on it. I wanted him to be in on it! Cause I love the sound of a kid. I think kids make a great sound. I think they're much more articulate than

we are.

[Let Mercy Lead, whole song]

DJ: Hatching of a Heart, just the title of that song is very cool. I want to guess what that really means, but I'll probably guess wrong, so you'd better just go into it and act stupid!

[Hatching of a Heart fades in...]

RM: That's a line I...I stole that straight out of Thomas Merton. All the best lines are really stolen. (laughs)

[Hatching of a Heart fades out...]

DJ: You know, when I first heard the song Promenade, I really wanted to call my friends and just get a square dance happening.

RM: That's the idea of the song. It's a song about a square dance. Sort of. I mean, in a sense.

DJ: Well, yeah, just the name of it. But there's gotta be more to it...I know you wouldn't just write a song...

RM: (interrupts) More to the song...?

DJ: Than just a square dance, yeah... (laughs)

RM: Well, yeah, and it's a funny thing because the whole thing was sort of a parable, but I didn't know what it was about when I wrote it. But now I do. Once again we're back to the thing of, we're always trying to come up with ways of making Christianity more appealing when Christianity is appealing. It's not something we make appealing. We don't make it appealing by doing anything, except being Christian. And so, it's a circular song, because it ends up where it starts. I am Officer Black. It's about this guy who goes up to make these people who are dancing and playing music, he's supposed to make them be quiet. But he is so drawn into the music that he goes back down to the people who sent him and says "No way. Y'all need to go out there and make music. You don't need to be quiet." And I think that's the way Christianity is. You know, you talk to people who are really anti-Christian, and you go, "Boy, you got a point. The church has done some really awful things and you've got a point, the Bible doesn't always make sense, and you've got a point, I can't prove that God exists to you. But here's the thing: if you know God, the rest of it sort of flows from there."

[Promenade fades in and out...]

[Wounds of Love fades in...]

DJ: Have you ever been wounded by love?

RM: Oh, yeah.

DJ: Well, how many, well, no I won't ask how many times...I know at least three. (both laugh)

RM: Anyone who's ever been in love's been wounded by it. My thing is, if you're going to be wounded by something, it might as well be by love. (both laugh) And if you are too scared of being wounded to love anybody, then you're worse than wounded. You're dead. And so, this is sort of a blessing you're giving to someone who's far away from you, someone you want to be with, and you say to them "Hey, there's gonna be some hurt in life. It's either gonna be inflicted on you by someone you love, or it's gonna be inflicted on you by yourself. I hope it comes to you through someone you love." The real tragedy in life would not to be wounded by love, but it would be to have never loved because you were so afraid of being wounded. The real tragedy in life would have been to have missed life because you were afraid of dying.

[Wounds of Love fades out...]

DJ: One of my favorite songs on the record (and I know Beaker does not believe me) (Rich laughs)...but Damascus Road. I just love that song. It's one of those songs I will fast-forward to get to. Which is a pretty good indication that I like the song. I don't wanna wait 18 minutes to get to it.

RM: So you don't like the other songs, the songs before it?

DJ: I hate all the other songs. (Rich laughs) Damascus Road, I wish the album was just one long, you know...

RM: Well, I really like it, for a lot of reasons. I wrote some of it years and years ago. I wrote it the night I was engaged and my fiancee broke off the engagement, and I went away and then I went, "Oh, man, I'm gonna feel really depressed, but before I get really depressed, you're supposed to thank God in all things, so I'm gonna try to think of something thankful to say." And that's when I wrote that song. Of course, this many years later, it doesn't make a lot of sense, anything I wrote the first time around. So Beaker helped me to revise it, and wrote the bridge in it, and stuff like that...I like it because I think sometimes we take worship so seriously. You know, we think "OK, worship time. Let's huff and puff and blow the house down. Let's get hysterical about something," and this song is

a very worshipful song, but it's very joyous. A lot of the times we think of the idea of self-sacrifice being this morbid, "Oh, I'm gonna be a martyr for Christ" thing. When you realize, wow, what a wonderful thing that I should be able to give my life away on something so rich and so wonderful. What is my life that I want to keep it, in view of what I gain by giving it up? And so it's kind of a prayer, it's kind of a worship, it's kind of a lot of things, and it sounds so silly, that's what I love about it.

DJ: And that's maybe what drew me to it. I think a lot of people that have the same experience, you know, when you first hear it, you know...you just think, I gotta listen to this thing again, because that couldn't have been it.

RM: Yeah. You know, the St. Francis thing. St. Francis has been called the...he's been called a lot of things, but one of the...I can't remember the exact word, but it means something like "Clown...the clown for God." He did a lot of clowning around as worship. And I think there's something to that.

DJ: That kind of ties you and Beaker together too, with that "Kid Brothers" thing. Just a couple of clowns for God.

[Damascus Road fades in and out...]

DJ: So who's Eli?

RM: Eli is Rick & Nicky Lundgren's little girl. She was born about a month after Aidan was. I had this little hammered dulcimer melody that I really liked, it was kind of a kid-y kind of melody. Maybe I should write a children's album. I didn't want to go to all the bother to do that, so I thought about Eli, and I went, this would be a nice thing for her. I talked to Lee and Nicky, and we decided to write a song for her, and use the little melody.

Once again, when parents start talking to their own kids, they're very picky about what they say and we got nowhere and got nowhere and got nowhere...finally we recorded, while doing the album, the dulcimer part. And in their hotel room we finished the song. And Nicky had talked about the prayers of Paul in his letters, and there were a couple of prayers that she especially liked that he prayed for the Ephesians, and I think maybe one in Galatians. We talked about the image, just the sound of the hammered dulcimer, and she said, "Yeah, that sounds kind of like a cowboy, and kind of like a ballerina all at the same time. We really worked from the idea of that scripture, those prayers that Paul prayed for the churches, which would also be Nicky's prayer for Eli and Lee's prayer for her as well. And that one little image of a cowgirl ballerina, something that is both rough and tough and delicate and graceful, a lot of different things. Cause kids are more than just one thing. We tend to see each other very one-dimensionally, and people are

multidimensional.

[Eli's Song fades in and then out...]

DJ: The song Cry the Name is another one of those songs that, just the title is really intriguing to me. The song is intriguing, but the title just drove me to it.

[Cry the Name fades in...]

RM: Getting down into the Southwest and really seeing the canyons and really hearing the sounds that you hear in them. You don't hear it anywhere else. Of course we didn't write it there, we wrote it in Nashville, but it's just that whole thing of...I think one of the things I love about the desert is that there are few illusions out there in the desert. You're just out there, you're alone, there's nothing to soften the landscape. It's very rugged, it's very stark, and it shocks you out of that coma that we get into by being perpetually comfortable. And so, the song is another prayer song. It's a prayer that a guy prays when he looks around and sees how beautiful and desolate the world is. And that it is both of those things. Both of those things causes us to cry out in the name of the One who loves us.

[Cry the Name fades out...]

DJ: I'm not sure exactly what it is about the song The Breaks, but it seems to have a unique quality, like there's a whole other dimension to it.

[The Breaks fades in...]

RM: Well, I wrote that one in Ireland. And I wrote it as a love song. And I think even at the time I suspected that...there are times when you think it would be fun to be in love, and you realize, ahh, this is something I can't really do, and so even while you're enjoying that brief, frail illusion, you go, "This is not what it is. This is not what it's supposed to be. So I have to go beyond this, go past it. I have to leave this." And so I think for me it's kind of a combination of whimsy and longing involved in this. It's kind of like, ooh, ow, this really hurts, but...so what?

DJ: It brings up a lot of feelings.

[The Breaks fades out...]

RM: Yeah, which is typical of life.

DJ: You've captured a lot of that on this record. A lot of the fun stuff, but...and I don't want to think the other albums weren't fun. But this one, it just seems like you smile a lot more,

doing this record.

RM: Yeah. It was an easier record to smile on. I mean, there were tense moments, and there were...any time you get that many musicians who write and do that thing together, you've got a lot of egos, you've got a lot of strong opinions, you've got a lot of deeply felt emotions, you've got a lot of stuff. (chuckles) So in that setting you're gonna have a lot of conflict. You're gonna have a lot of tense moments. And we certainly have our share of those when we work together. But for me the end product is, you have a record that is very much like the band. It's kind of multi-dimensional. That's why everybody helped produce it. To bring that many flavors into one project was really important to me. And to give each of those flavors space to breathe and room to voice themselves on. That was important.

DJ: There's gonna be some people who hear the record for the first time, just when they think they've got it figured out and thinking, "Boy, this is nice. I know exactly what Rich is saying here. It really speaks to me." Then they're gonna hit Quoting Deuteronomy to the Devil. It's like smacks you right between the eyes, because that is a powerful song. Even just musically speaking. It just kind of rips you apart.

RM: Well, I thought it was a funny song. I think it was one of the funnier ones on the record. But I think one of the things - I think there's a book by Fulton Sheen called The Life of Christ and he talks about the temptations of Christ in the wilderness, and how Satan didn't offer Christ anything God didn't want Christ to have. There's nothing wrong with food. There's nothing wrong with power. There's nothing wrong with glory. These are all things that were waiting for Christ. But what Satan offered him was a shortcut to those things. Satan said, "you can have these things without suffering. But let me show you how to do it, rather than doing it God's way." And one of the problems I think we have in the Christian church today, one of the problems I have in my own life anyway, is that we want to do godly things but we want to do them in a worldly way. We want to have God's will in our terms and you can't do that. You either follow God...if you follow God, you go the path He leads. You don't say "Well, God, I'll meet you in Indianapolis." You follow Him all the way to Indianapolis. You go the way He goes, the route He goes.

Because that is the route He wants you to take. And that route is going to take you, necessarily, through some suffering. You have to die to yourself. People always want to argue, "You have to be baptized to be a Christian. You have to be a member of a church." They want to argue about all this stuff about Christianity. If we take the gospel seriously, you have to die to yourself to be a Christian, to be spiritually vital, to be spiritually alive. Why don't we take the gospel as seriously as we take everything else? If you want to inherit the earth, you'd best be meek. If you want to be filled with righteousness, you'd

best hunger for it. Jesus, when he was dealing with the devil, it was there in the desert, in the 40 days of fasting that the victory was won. And it was 3 years later on Calvary that it was actualized. But the decision was final there in the wilderness. Christ accepted suffering. Christ accepted the plan of God for His life. It was there that Christ closed all the doors to any other possibility. And I loved in the play "Godspell," how during the crucifixion, these demons come up to Christ and they're saying "Give the word and these stones will become bread." "Throw yourself off of this temple and the angels will come and rescue you. Do this and I'll..." I mean, they quote the temptation of the wilderness. And I thought that was a great piece of insight on the part of whoever came up with that. I suppose Steven Schwartz. And Fulton Sheen then says the same thing, when he talks about Christ in the wilderness, that Christ accepted his identity as the Lamb of God and said, "I will not be a social reformer. I did not come to distribute bread. I came to be bread. If I'm going to be the bread of life, then I'm going to have to be broken." When Christ said, "I will not throw myself off this temple to see if the angels will rescue me," it was because he knew he wasn't going to take himself off of the Cross. He said "I will not put God to the test. I will allow God to test me. I will allow God to prove himself in my life. I'm not going to make God jump through hoops. I'll let Him hold the hoops and I'll jump where He says." And when Christ said "I will not bow down and worship Satan," the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory were forever His. And he didn't leave us out of the deal. Because of the suffering he endured, we get to be His Kingdom. We get to be His Glory.

DJ: That's a constant amazement, isn't it? Why we don't deserve anything, and the fact that He did that...and so many songs on this record say the same thing, in so many ways.

RM: well, I always feel like I'm a broken record. I don't think I'm saying anything today that I wasn't saying 8 albums ago. I don't think I was saying anything 8 albums ago that I wasn't saying before I even got to make an album. I think sometimes I've grown as a songwriter. I think my voice is...well, you work with what you've got. And I don't have the makings of a great voice, but I think singing-wise, I've improved since the first album. But message-wise, I think I'm saying the same exact things that I've always said. Which is why it's amazing to me that anyone stays interested.

[Quoting Deuteronomy to the Devil, fades in then out...]

DJ: For the Brother's Keeper Tour, a couple of great players opening up for you. Carolyn Arends and Ashley Cleveland. You looking forward to that?

RM: Oh, very much. I'm looking forward to just spending time with them as much as hearing them. Although I love hearing them. I've known Ashley for years, and she used to come up to my house. I had these friends who would come visit and they loved her music so much and she'd come out and sit down in the living room and play for hours and we

never got enough. She's one of those artists who's really able to let the rubber meet the road in terms of Christianity. You know, recovery and those sorts of issues. And it's a wonderful thing to hear. And on her new tape, one of the things I really love is that in concert, we end by doing hymns, and she does several arrangements of hymns on her new tape, and of course, when you hear someone say "We're doing arrangements of hymns," you think pipe organs, strings; well, until you've heard Ashley Cleveland singing a hymn, you haven't heard every possible interpretation. I know one time I visited the church where she attends, and she started the service out, singing The Morning Guilds the Skies and I had never liked that hymn until I heard her sing it, and all of the sudden I thought, "What a great hymn! This is a blast!" So that fits exactly in with where we're at. Carolyn Arends, I only have met a couple times very briefly, and she's a lot of fun to be around, so I'm really looking forward to getting to know her better.

DJ: And the whole tour, being sponsored by International Bible Society, again, that's something new for you to have an organization like that sponsoring the whole tour, that's great.

RM: Yeah. And I'm very excited about the whole Jesus Way Bible, because...going into a Native population and being able to say "This is not a white man's religion. This is the religion of God. This is a revelation of truth. And it has nothing to do with any particular group of people, but it speaks to all people." I think a lot of the work the International Bible Society has done is that way. To say that every people group needs to be reached. For me, it's very cool the way I feel, like...you know, I love Compassion and I also love International Bible Society and I think they're both two organizations that go hand in hand. It's hard to tell someone about the bread of life if they're starving to death. So one is providing very real, educational and physical needs and the other is providing Scriptures, which of course address us not only in terms of socially and emotionally and physically, but spiritually as well. It's two things I feel great about.

DJ: You told me once about a chief. And he had some really interesting things to say about the church.

RM: One of the really interesting stories to me is the story of Chief Joseph and after they'd cheated him out of everything, and they're putting him on a reservation, they said "Why don't you want to go to the reservation? If you go to the reservation, we'll give you schools." And he said, "We don't want schools." And the government of the United States said "Why don't you want schools?" And Chief Joseph said "If you give us schools then churches will follow." And so the United States government said "You don't want churches?" And his father, Chief Joseph's father was a Christian and Joseph was baptized in the church and rejected Christianity, and he said, "No, we don't want churches." They said, "Why don't you want churches?" And this is a very telling statement, he said "When

we have churches it will teach us to argue about God." And we can argue about a lot of things, I know, but we shouldn't argue about God. It's very difficult for me to understand why the church has been so reluctant to speak with Native Americans about Christ in whose name their land was stolen. Maybe there's a little bit of shame or something. Which might even be appropriate. But the past is past and people need the Lord. And I think when an injustice has been done, people need to go the extra mile. You can't undo what's been done, and there've been injustices done to people of all races and all creeds and etc. But I think that there has to be some kind of healing. And I want to be a part of that.

[Cry the Name fades in then out...]

Transcript by Mike H. Barlowe

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Christian Online


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OnlineHost : Copyright 1995 America Online, Inc.

ChristOnLi : Is everyone ready to begin?
ChristOnLi : Rich will be typing from an In-Store appearance in
             South Carolina.
ChristOnLi : He is just finishing up with some fans.

OnlineHost : The auditorium consists of two major areas: the
           : audience, where you are right now, and the stage,
           : where the speakers appear. Text which you type
           : onscreen shows only to those in your row, prefaced
           : by the row number in parentheses, such as (2) if
           : you are in row 2. To interact with the speaker,
           : use the Interact icon on your screen.

ChristOnLi : Let's all welcome Rich Mullins to Christianity Online
             and the Globe Auditorium.
ChristOnLi : Rich, welcome we are glad to have you.
ChristOnLi : Any opening remarks for us tonight?

RichMullin : I've never done this before and I don't type
RichMullin : or have a computer yet,,,,
RichMullin : so
RichMullin : here goes....

ChristOnLi : Well for not typing you're doing pretty good so far.
ChristOnLi : Here is the first question.
Question   : When you were a kid did your parents make you
             practice or did you want to on your own?

RichMullin : I wanted to....sort of
RichMullin : I would just sit and jam.
RichMullin : And they thought that I was practicing

Question   : Who will you be touring with on the Brothers keeper
             tour?
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RichMullin : Ragamuffin Band, is Rick Elias, Lee Lundgren, Beaker, Jimmy A, and Aaron Smith....
RichMullin : Mark Robertson, and Nicki Lundgren, and Beaker wife Julie.
RichMullin : Who is Aiden's mother....

Question : Hey Rich! Your new CD is great! Could you comment on the meaning of the lyrics to the
Question : song "Promenade"? Also, any plans on your tour to come to the North Florida area?

RichMullin : Promenade just a parable. About a guy who comes in contact
RichMullin : with Christianity/life/music/goodness and is ah....
RichMullin : converted.

Question : Rich, you have often worked with Amy Grant. Is there a certain song that you both have
Question : worked on that you prefer over others?

RichMullin : Every song that I have worked on with her I have preferred over others
RichMullin : only my favorite Amy Grant song is.....
RichMullin : Lead Me On.....which I only wish that I had written.... LOL

ChristOnLi : Here is a question from a songwriter...
Question : how does one get original songs to people who might want them?

RichMullin : I think....
RichMullin : the people for whom your songs mean the most
RichMullin : are people that you come in contact with everyday.
RichMullin : And you should play your songs for them. This may not be the answer that you wanted...
RichMullin : to hear...but ah...I don't know what else to say. Nashville is kind of over whelmed...
RichMullin : with songs. And I don't know how to get them to listen to my songs.

ChristOnLi : Personal question?
Question : Rich, this is dear old John of Bellbrook. Had any Skyline lately?

RichMullin : Ah! Yeh.....
RichMullin : I had another friend of mine from Cinci.
RichMullin : Make me some, in Colorado....

Question : Could you tell us a little bit about how your work on the Indian reservation is going?

RichMullin : I'm just getting acclimated....
RichMullin : there's a lot new rules...
RichMullin : to learn about how to be polite....etc.
RichMullin : I'm enjoying the high value Navajo's place on listening but its hard when you talk as...
RichMullin : much as I do.

Question : Hi Rich!! Your music has been a great influence in my life. I think you are you of the
Question : best musician/song-writers of our time. How do you keep your faith in the Lord so strong?

RichMullin : Same way that everybody else does....
RichMullin : "Read your Bible pray everyday, and you'll grow grow grow."
RichMullin : Just a little something that I learned in Sunday School.

Question : Rich, what do you feel about CCM artists trying to break into the pop music world, and is
Question : that something you would be interested in doing?

RichMullin : I don't think about CCM artist that much.....I have no interest in doing it.
RichMullin : I want to be a teacher...

Question : Rich - any plans to put out a video for "brothers keeper" like the one you put out for

Question : "Liturgy"? I really like those videos!

RichMullin : Thanks, ah but we are not going to be doing any more video on this album.

RichMullin : I'm not as cute as I was on Liturgy.....LOL

Question : Which comes first, the words or the music?

RichMullin : First thing that I write is the accompaniment and then I just kinda hang a melody over
RichMullin : the top of it....
RichMullin : and then... and then think of the lyric
RichMullin : as subtitles for people who don't understand the melody.......:)

Question : What college do you go to and what is your major?

RichMullin : I just graduate....
RichMullin : from Friends Univ.
RichMullin : with a music ed. degree.
RichMullin : Friends is in Wichita, KS

Question : Rich thanks for your artistic talent in your music, and your lyrics that speak to our
Question : soul. One ? .. what is your relationship to AIDAN in Let Mercy Lead. Keep the Faith

RichMullin : I'm Aidan's dad's best friend....
RichMullin : Aidan's dad is Beaker..... Julie's husband ;)

Question : Who's this Beaker guy, anyway? How did you guys meet?

RichMullin : Beaker is my best friend and ah....co-writer and
RichMullin : we met when he was in the 7th grade.
RichMullin : I was in College.... really!!!
RichMullin : His youth pastor,
RichMullin : was a friend of mine

Question : Is Rich's band with him?

RichMullin : Yes...
RichMullin : No, not in this very room....
RichMullin : but, I think that they are in Greenville....I hope ?
RichMullin : The first concert of the tour is in Greenville, SC
but it will not be online.....

Question : Rich, when did you cut your hair?

RichMullin : A couple of years ago in Europe, because it was HOT!

Question : Rich: How has being on the Indian reservation
affected your music? Trying anything new
Question : musically?

RichMullin : Well....
RichMullin : Listening will certainly affect my music...
RichMullin : and since I'm learning more about listening....
RichMullin : but I doubt that I'll be using any tom
tom's.....soon :)

Question : Who are some of your musical influences when you were
growing up?

RichMullin : All the 70's/60's guys.....
RichMullin : Stephen Stills, Cat Stevens, James Taylor, ah.....
RichMullin : Blue Cheer..... the band that my mom hated.....
RichMullin : ah.....
RichMullin : Joni Mitchell, ah..... Carol King.
RichMullin : Bob Dylan.... I love Bob Dylan, I just turned Mitch
(a friend of mine who was born to late
RichMullin : on to Bob Dylan and he just bought about 10 tapes of
his.... that's a slight exaggeration.
RichMullin : I never liked southern rock.... jazz..... ah....
RichMullin : or.....
RichMullin : gospel.
RichMullin : But just about everything else was great with me....

Question : Rich, which of your albums is your personal favorite?

RichMullin : Newest one.....it's always the newest one..... or the next one.

Question : Rich, what's the story about you quitting the music biz and becoming a missionary to
Question : Indians-is this true?

RichMullin : LOL
RichMullin : Lets see..... I moved to the reservation.....
RichMullin : I hope to teach in a couple of different mission schools
RichMullin : as a volunteer....
RichMullin : so..... I'll have to keep making music.... to support myself.
RichMullin : Otherwise I'll have to get a job.....:)

ChristOnLi : We have time for a couple more questions.
Question : Mr. Mullins.. St. Augustine, FL here. I'm an aspiring
Songwriter. How did you get into the
Question : field of Contemporary Christian songwriting/playing?

RichMullin : In a former life.....
RichMullin : I murdered a church organist....
RichMullin : and now I'm paying for my sins.....
RichMullin : Actually....
RichMullin : I love being a Christian musician.
RichMullin : Started playing church music when I was in the first or second grade
RichMullin : and just kept on playing.
RichMullin : I'm no more a Christian musician now than I was back then
RichMullin : I just make better money.....

ChristOnLi : Thanks for being with us tonight Rich, any final comments for the audience?

RichMullin : Hold on everyone....
RichMullin : Rich is going to type his finally comments or closing arguments.....

ChristOnLi : Oh Lord be with us...
RichMullin : I make an awefull typer but.....
RichMullin : it,s very flattering to think that you guys are interested enough to wait for me to get th
RichMullin : get these answer----how do you backspace?
ChristOnLi : Thanks for joining us tonight everyone! Please drive home safely...
RichMullin : answers typed out. I appreciate this all very much and i kind of feqr it. FEAR IT that
RichMullin : is......
RichMullin : Nothing is more deadley for attention freaks than attention.... but, I will try to do
RichMullin : something worthwhile with whqat (that,s "WHAT"} you,ve given me here.
RichMullin : So, as I write on every autograph, I,ll just try to encourage you to "be God,s",
RichMullin : and to know that He makes us His, and He does a good job of it--better than we can.
RichMullin : It,s funny to me how little able i am to give accurate answers about myself--it,s scarey t
RichMullin : scarey to think that people so often want me to give answers about God. Thanks for
RichMullin : avoiding theological questions--I could only sound more stupider talking about all that
RichMullin : than just merely going on and on about myself. I am sure that God is good, that God
RichMullin : real, and that God is love... that life is a giflt and (with or without an extra "L" in it
RichMullin : an adventure and wee all do the best we can, we,re all in this together and we're all
RichMullin : weirdly alone too. Be thankful. That I guess is about all I can think of to say.
RichMullin : next

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The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine Article

kidbrothers.net/interviews/lighthouse-electronic-magazine-may97.html

From Nashville to Wichita to New Mexico ... Step By Step
Kathy Sanders
The Lighthouse Electronic Magazine
May 1995

Like most of you, I distinctly remember the first time I heard a Rich Mullins song; it was almost 20 years ago. August 19th, 1975, the first night of Freshmen Orientation at Cincinnati Bible College, I sat in the midst of over 100 other people who felt as scared and alone as I when the concert began. A rather shaggy looking character, just 18 years old, with torn jeans (against the dress code) and bare feet (Heavens!) sat down at a rickety piano and spun tales of faith and wonder with music that I knew even then called for a much wider audience. Mullins and I became friends first and later "family" through nearly 2 decades of teaching, working, and laughing together - through the thousands of miles on the road that eventually led 5 of us to Wichita over 6 years ago.

Later this month [May '95] Mullins will leave Wichita for New Mexico. In the midst of the chaos we both call our lives, we sat down to do a legitimate interview about the changes that are coming in his life and why he finds it difficult to leave this river city. We settled down on the floor of my office to get serious.

Kathy Sanders: Why teach? And why teach music? And why teach music to Navajo children?

Rich Mullins: I am a teacher. It's who I am, the calling that God built in to me. And our calling defines both who we are and what we do. I come from a long line of teachers - my granddad and others in my family. Even though my dad was not a formal teacher, teaching was still a large part of who he was and continues in me. I want to teach music because I love people more than music, but I know the power of music. I know that all people, especially kids, can win at music. Life lessons are learned in music... it's like all the practicing musicians do, most of practice involves being willing to fail. When you have finally made all the mistakes you can, you succeed! You can't do anything else but succeed!

Music is powerful; people - even those who think they can't sing - respond to music. I want to pass that on to young people. They'll be surrounded by music all of their lives, I'd like to open the doors of good music to them - teach them to listen with some discernment.

KS: And the Navajos?

RM: They first interested me because they are a shepherding people. So much of the Bible was written to or from people who were a part of that life. It's a culture I want to learn to know. Also, I'm nearly 40 and still single. You know, there is little point in being single if you don't take advantage of some of the more positive points of singleness, like being able to move to a remote place to teach. And I don't want to wake up old someday never knowing anything about life other than living in middle class America.

KS: You have a new project out in the fall. I've heard a lot of working titles for it - Songs, Too Many Chiefs and Not Enough Native Americans, Quoting Deuteronomy to the Devil - what in the world are you going to call this thing?

RM: [Laughter] Believe it or not, we're just gonna name it after one of the songs, Brother's Keeper. We took a different approach in this album and it was great - and scary. The album is very - well - raw. We didn't worry as much about being eloquent or poetic as getting real things said in real ways. I have alot of good memories about the writing of this project... Most of it was written on Beaker's [Rich's partner] porch or in my teepee or Les and Kay Arvin's farm outside Wichita. It's family oriented; 2 of the band members became fathers during the writing and 2 of the songs are about those children. Three of the band members wives' sang on the project and all of that together made for a different and somehow more grounded feeling to "Brother's Keeper." I'm looking forward to touring the project this fall.

KS: Yet another of the "this-is-the-last-time-we-swear-it Rich Mullins tours?" There have been a few...

RM: [Harder Laughter] We could call it the "Yet Another Rich Mullins Farewell Tour - #5 In A Series Of 10."

KS: You are leaving Wichita and I know you have loved living here. What do you love most? What will be the hardest to leave?

RM: First of all, I love Friends University and Central Christian Church - what great places. I love the political action in this city. I love that people are willing to debate hard issues and that the Church in Wichita is willing to take difficult stands. I have been so impressed with the ways the churches cooperate and that people like Doris Howard and High School Ministry Network can help bring down denominational and racial walls with things like Locker 2 Locker - those issues just didn't matter then. It's also incredible to live in a city that has a radio station like Light 99 FM and see the good it brings to the whole Christian community. There are a lot of people doing quietly amazing things in this city. But, I guess

for me personally, the greatest part about the time I've been here in Wichita is that there was a whole group of people here who knew me for exactly who I am and still accepted me and loved me. There are two very important things you can say to special people in your life - it should be engraved on my tombstone: forgive me, and thank you.

(Sanders has been co-host of the morning show at Light 99 FM in Wichita for four years.)

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Syndicate Magazine Interview

Volume 9, 1994

> *In another of Pursuit of a Legacy's interview segments, Mullins refers briefly, but positively, to the reverence in which Catholics hold the Virgin Mary. Taken with his monastic tendencies and his admiration for the writings of Catholics like St. Augustine and G.K. Chesterton, such comments makes Mullins seem almost more Catholic than Protestant these days.*
>
> *"I grew up in rural Indiana," Mullins recalls. "Everybody was Protestant. Almost everybody was white. I didn't understand racial tension because we had no races. The only prejudice that we could afford was against Italians and the only reason we had a prejudice against Italians was they were mysterious. They went to the Catholic Church and they were allowed to drink in church and we weren't. So for years, Catholicism had a shroud of mystery around it. When I would sneak into a Catholic Church (I used to because I thought they were so beautiful) I always felt as if I were being tempted away from true Christianity. It always looked like idolatry to me to have candles, statues and praying to saints and Mary."*
>
> *"Then several years ago, I read Orthodoxy by [G.K.] Chesterton. I have seldom cried when I read a book, but I wept- I mean blubbered- from pure joy, the joy of saying 'Wow! This is stuff that I've always suspected in the back of my mind but could never articulate. This guy's articulating for me what I could never get any kind of handle on in order to hold and appreciate."*
>
> *"The difference between me and most Protestants" notes Mullins, "is most Protestants have no problem at all saying, 'The Lord told me this' or 'The Lord told me that', but they won't believe that the Lord speaks through the Pope. You know, at least this guy has some credentials."*
>
> *Mullins laughs. "I read the Pope's newest encyclical (The Splendor of Truth: Veritatis Splendor) and to me it was shocking. It was a wonderful breath of fresh air that someone says, 'There is such a thing as truth, and it*

is a beautiful thing. So until we learn to long for it and set everything else aside, our lives will not make sense"

"For me, I have no idea what's going to happen. But more than ever before, I think that a great part of the Holy Spirit in our lives is played out through what the Catholic Church would call a Eucharistic community, and that's the thing that is lacking in Protestantism. If Christ is the head of the body, the body has to be together or it-"

Mullins pauses.

"What good is the head if the body isn't -you know what I mean?"

If it's chopped up in wriggling pieces?

"Right" answers Mullins, who despite having been involved with Christian music for over a decade, has perhaps- with his plans for future recordings, resisting temptation and working among the poor- just begun to play his role in unifying the Body of Christ.

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WCBW Interview

D.J. (to listeners): Rich Mullins is with us this morning, we welcome Rich to 104.9 FM.

D.J. (to Rich): Hi, Rich.

> *Rich: How are you?*

D.J.: I'm doin' great! You are calling us from Wichita, Kansas today. And you are gettin' ready to make your way to St. Louis, Missouri this weekend. Two big shows at the Westport Playhouse. Ticket sales are goin' great, and people are real excited about seeing you come back to St. Louis. It's been a while.

> *Rich: Yeah. It's been a long time. And I think we've wanted to come back, and it just seems like every time someone has approached us we couldn't do it. And then when we'd say, "Well, how 'bout this date?" they'd say, "Oh wow, that doesn't work." So, it's been a long time, but we've always had a great time in St. Louis, and we're really lookin' forward to bein' there now.*

D.J.: Yeah, you've got a lot of fans here, Rich, and for the folks who are listening this morning who may not know much about Rich Mullins, I **think** you began your career, basically, in **Christian** music anyway, as a songwriter.

> *Rich: Uh huh.*

D.J.: You, of course, penned one of your most famous songs, "Sing Your Praise to the Lord", for Amy Grant, right? And that was a few years ago, wasn't it?

> *Rich: That was years and years ago. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: It probably seems like a very long time.

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: That was a great song, and was on her Age To Age record, which, I think, sold a bunch of copies, didn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J. : "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was one of your biggest songs back in the **early** days. And then, there was a transition period between songwriter and artist. Was that difficult? You know, who came up with the idea that Rich Mullins should be a singer?

> *Rich: Well, I had always done my own stuff and traveled around. Even when I was just **writing** I did a lot of concerts in youth groups and church camps and that kind of thing. I always enjoyed performing, but... I don't know, you take what you get. And I was pretty happy as a writer. I actually **love** to write. So, that was fun. The only problem with just being a writer, is, when other people are lookin' at your stuff to do it, you kind of have to write with that in mind. And when you're an artist, you can be a little more selfish about what you write about. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: Right, right, and you're not writing for a certain person, you're writin' for yourself.

> *Rich: Yeah. It's much more fun.*

D.J.: I bet it is. I bet it's a lot more fun. Your World As Best As I Remember It, Volumes 1 and 2 projects included some great songs. Those were some pretty popular records, weren't they?

> *Rich: I think so.*

D.J.: "Step By Step", "Boy Like Me, Man Like You", "Where You Are", "Jacob and Two Women", "Calling Out Your Name", "Sometimes By Step", "Everyman", "The Just Shall

Live", "Growing Young", and, a very interesting song that I have to find out about this morning...

> *Rich: Okay...*

D.J.: "The Maker of Noses". Any particular reason for writing a song about a nose?

> *Rich: Well, that's one of those songs that was kind of a gift, because... you know, we had written almost enough material for two albums. And we recorded most of both albums in one sitting. And it was just a few songs shy. Well, when we had to finish up the second volume, when we had to fill out the ten-song thing, we were, by that time we... you know, you go through periods when you just write like crazy. And then you go through periods when you couldn't write a **shopping** list if you had to. So we, Beaker and I, just, I don't know, we came up with that song right in the studio. And neither of us really thought very much of it. I think what we were trying to approach there is... because we tend to be fairly conservative as Christians, sometimes we become really cynical about anything that's politically correct.*

D.J.: Right.

> *Rich: And, so we always sound like, kind of sour notes, going, "Oh, knock off all the stuff about world peace, and ecology, and racial equality, and equity, and all that kind of thing." And I was kind of going, "But just because I don't think that the politically correct **method** of attaining those things works, I still do **want** peace, whether or not it's gonna happen." And, as a Christian, I think we're called to **work** toward peace. I still wanna see racial equality, even though I don't think that a lot of the ways that the PC's are going about it is really gonna work. So **why** don't we, instead of poo-pooing all these issues, why don't we embrace them in, because of who we are as Christians, rather than just going, "Ah, that's a bunch of craziness."*

D.J.: Well yeah, I think that was God's intention from the beginning, wasn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah, I think it is. And I think that a lot of times, people tend to be **so** reactionary. And so you hear people using **great** ideas in order to promote selfishness and degeneracy. And you tend to react by saying, "Wow, I don't want to have any part of **that**." I think that the answer is to be **pro**active, is to live under the influence of the Spirit, rather than live your life within the boundaries of certain issues.*

D.J.: It is so easy to get wrapped up in those things though, isn't it?

> *Rich: Yeah, it really is, especially for me, because I think I'm a natural bleeding-heart kind of a rabble-rouser kind of guy.*

D.J.: You couldn't tell from your lyrics, I mean, not at all. I hope you take this as a compliment, you know, if you listen to a Rich Mullins project, you notice that the words are very unique. The lyrics are unique, they're **totally** different from anything else you hear in Christian music. Where do you come up with some of these things, Rich?

> *Rich: Well, one thing is, I don't listen to a lot of Christian music. I don't listen to a lot of **pop** music. I think that we tend to really be affected by what we listen to, and you know, what goes in comes out, that kind of thing. So I think, by living in Kansas instead of Nashville, by listening to a lot of traditional music, a lot of classical music, a lot of **that** kind of thing instead of always listening to what's hot on the Christian charts, I think that I have managed to not get sucked into the cliche world.*

D.J.: Yeah, you know, I remember a few years back you were signed by Reunion Records, you started with Reunion. You're **still** on Reunion, right?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: But I remember, a few years back I saw a letter. I was in Christian radio in the mid-eighties, and it was a letter addressed from you, I believe, to the people at Reunion thanking them for their involvement with you, and all that kind of thing. But, you were

wanting to kinda take a back seat to the big **fame** deal, weren't you?

> *Rich: Hmm?*

D.J.: You remember that letter? I remember that letter **vividly**.

> *Rich: Hmm? Well... (He laughs.)*

D.J.: You don't remember it?!!!

> *Rich: No. (still laughing)*

D.J.: (D.J. is now laughing.) You kinda like the fame, huh?

> *Rich: Um, that's funny.*

D.J.: You don't **remember** that letter? I wish I had a copy. In fact, it's probably around here still, somewhere.

> *Rich: Well, you know, I write letters a lot. (He laughs.)*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) Something about playin' in churches and that kind of thing.

> *Rich: Uh-huh...*

D.J.: Where you kinda liked the grassroots type of message, of reaching people, and stuff like that. But if you don't **remember** it, well, we'll just go on then.

> *Rich: (Laughing a lot.)*

D.J.: I'll find it, and if I find it, I'll bring it to you Saturday and **prove** it to ya.

> *Rich: This is a backwards interview. Ordinarily I'm making a reference to something that I've done that the D.J. is going, "Oh, I didn't know about that." (Rich is still laughing.)*

D.J.: I'm gonna find that letter, Rich Mullins, and I'll bring it to you Saturday. But we had asked the listeners to call up with some questions for ya. And these are always the most difficult questions, unless you're asking a question about a letter you wrote about ten years ago. (Rich begins laughing again.) But here's the first question. Are ya ready?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: Solo, But Not Alone tour. What does that mean?

> *Rich: That is the term that we've used when me and Beaker go out, because it's kind of like a solo concert, only there are two of us. So it's like... what it basically means is that I don't have a band with me. And Beaker, pretty much, in the course of a concert plays an accompanying role, so, it's not like we're a duo. I think of us as a duo, but I think the* ***audience*** *gets to feeling like, that he's accompanying me. So, it's kinda like I'm by myself, but I have someone with me, too. (Rich laughs.)*

D.J.: Is Beaker that guy on Saturday mornings? The scientist?

> *Rich: A lot of people think he is.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) All right, here's the next question. Are you ready?

> *Rich: Yeah.*

D.J.: Sometime back, you had said that you were gonna take a break from music and do some studying; and the listener said, "Well, now I see he's on tour. What's the deal?" What **is** the deal?

> *Rich: What's the **deal**? Well, after moving out here to Wichita, I have, in the last three years, I've been a full-time student. I've been carrying seventeen to nineteen hours a semester at Friends University. I had assumed, when I started that course of study, that, I would not have energy enough to keep up any kind of music thing. But, as it turns out, I have more energy than I thought.*

D.J.: So you're still doin' your music?

> *Rich: Yeah, I had just thought, "Wow! I remember when I was in school when I was younger, and I remember that it was pretty taxing. And so, if I go back to school, it pretty much means I'm not gonna be doing the music thing."*

D.J.: So, so you're **smarter** than you thought?

> *Rich: Either smarter or stupider. I'm not sure.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) One of the two. Well, we're glad you're still doin' your stuff, man. Hey, and here's the final question. Mother's Day just passed. This listener wanted to know what kind of gift you got your mom for Mother's Day.

> *Rich: You know... (he begins laughing) my family isn't real **big** on giving gifts. We never... everybody **calls** mom on Mother's Day, but we don't give a lot of gifts out. (He laughs again.)*

D.J.: So, it was a telephone call.

> *Rich: It was... actually it was a telephone call three days late.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) A belated phone call.

> *Rich: This is the... and the wonderful thing about my mom, is that she is very, a very down-to-earth woman. And in a lot of ways, she's one of the most practical people I know. And she never... one of the things I've always enjoyed about **both** my parents is, you know, when I went away to college... and I think part of this is because they had **five** kids instead of just two or three. And when I went away to college, I would go home to visit, or I would call home, and I **never** got the old, "Wow, you never call, you never..." you know, "Why haven't you called earlier?" blah blah blah. I never got all that stuff that a lot of my other friends got from their parents.*
>
> *I think my parents were pretty smart in that, when they were thinkin' through their lives, they kinda went, "Okay, we're gonna have kids in the house for probably about twenty-five years. And when they leave, our lives are gonna go on." And so, even though they were certainly loving, supportive, enthusiastic parents, once we left, they kind of had plans of **their** own. And they were very much caught up in what was goin' on there.*
>
> *You know, they're both real active... or, you know, of course my dad died a couple years ago so he's no longer **as** active in the church as he used to be. But mom continues to be active there, and my grandmother lives right next door, and my uncle lives next door, and my grandma's in her nineties. They take care of her. So, they have a pretty thriving family life going on still. And so, it's wonderful to be able to call mom, to be able to go home and visit, and to do all **that** kind of stuff, and I know she completely **enjoys** it, but it's **never** a big raucous deal.*

D.J.: Mom still lives in Indiana?

> *Rich: Yeah. She lives in the house that I grew up in.*

D.J.: I'll be doggone. Hey, we're gonna play a song in just a little bit about you growing up. We'll play that in just a moment. Can you hang on a second? We're gonna play the song and come back and wrap things up with you, Rich.

> *Rich: Okay.*

D.J.: Rich Mullins is our special guest this morning here on 104.9 FM, WCBW.

(D.J. plays "Boy Like Me, Man Like You".

D.J. (to listeners): Today's Christian radio 104.9 FM, WCBW, Rich Mullins, our special guest this morning here on 104.9 FM.

D.J. (to Rich): It **is** a continual process isn't it, Rich? That we become more and more like Jesus Christ. It doesn't happen overnight, does it?

> *Rich: Yeah, much to everyone's surprise.*

D.J.: (Interviewer laughs.) Yeah, it's not instant Jello. It just, it kinda takes some time to set up. And that is **ever** true. One of your latest, one of your new songs, Rich, is "Creed".

> *Rich: Um-hum.*

D.J.: That's what we are playing now as a current song. What's that song all about?

> *Rich: Well, in the last few years, Beaker and I have taken off on... are you there?*

D.J.: I sure am.

> *Rich: Oh, suddenly the phone got **really** quiet, I was going, "Oh no, we've been cut off."*

*In the last few years, we've, Beaker and I have had quite a, I think, spiritual pilgrimage. You know, first of all, moving into reading the Bible for what it **really** says rather than what we **think** it says. Going back and really trying to take a second look at the whole thing, rather than just, when we get to the parts of the Bible that don't make sense to us rather than just glibbing over them, let's really look at that seriously. And that was quite a challenge.*

*Another thing that has happened is, when you're a Christian musician and you travel around from one place to another, and you're involved with all kinds of different "flavors" of Christianity, you're constantly being judged by people, you know? There are... if you go to a Charismatic church and you **don't** speak in tongues, then the people say that you don't have the Holy Spirit. If you go to a fundamentalist church and you **do** speak in tongues, people say that you're demon-possessed, or that you are some kind of emotional ecstatic, or those kinds of things. If you believe in water baptism, you know (he laughs), one group of people will say that that defies the grace of God. If you believe in being saved by faith, then people will say, well, then you're denying the reality of the... blah, blah, blah.*

*You know, everywhere you go, people are **badgering** you to change your beliefs. And one of the things that we both realized, is that, boy, you cannot answer to everybody. And in an attempt to make Christ our Lord even more, we really tried to plug into a local church here in Wichita, which is part of the denomination that I grew up in. And really study what that church believes, and then really try to follow as closely as we can in our own lives, those beliefs.*

*And in the process, what we've done, is gone through and said, "Okay, here are all of the issues that people want to argue about," and "here are all the hot buttons, here is where the controversy lies. What do we believe is really **essential** in Christianity? Where do we think the 'meat and potatoes' of our faith really is?" And what we came up with was **strikingly** like the Apostle's Creed. And our church is a very non-creedal church, we don't recite any creed in our church. And, the church is, in fact, a little **proud** of being non-creedal. But when we looked at what we, together and separately, had said, "Boy, here are the things that we **cannot** compromise on..."*

You know, I don't have to worry too much about what I believe about, say, whether you should tithe, or whether you should give 100%. I don't have to

> *worry a whole lot about whether you're allowed to go **out** on Saturday night, or whether you're supposed to stay **in** on Saturday night. These are not things that make or break our faith. "Here are the things that are absolutely essential, and here are things that we can't jimmy on. These are the things that we can't compromise. These are the things that, if we were to lose this, we would no longer have a faith that is genuinely grounded and rooted in historic Christianity."*
>
> *And looking at our list, and then looking at the various creeds that the people of the ancient church had come up with, we went, "Wow! It is wonderful and remarkable that the Truth... when you let the dust settle from all the other nit-picky things that people want to spend their lives arguing over, when you let all that settle... the Truth really looks very much the same in the 20th Century as it did in the 1st Century, or whenever the church first began to formally state its beliefs."*
>
> *And so we were on a plane, and we were going through The Apostle's Creed. And interestingly enough, both Calvin's Institutes and Karl Barth's Dogmatics really are an examination of the Apostle's Creed. So, two major theologians - one would be a very early one and one would be a fairly recent one - looked at the Creed - at The Apostle's Creed specifically - as being a thing worth looking into. And it's **not** because either of those men or any of **us believe that reciting a creed will save you. I think the value of the Creed is not in the Creed itself, but it's in those things that the Creed gives witness to.***
>
> ***And, for me, it is wonderfully refreshing to be able to say, "This is what I believe in!" And, because I believe in these things, I have lined myself up, not only with the truth, because those things are true, but I've lined myself up with generations and generations of people who have clung to the same realities. And I'm not alone in my faith, even though I may feel overwhelmed at times, by people who are skeptical, or overwhelmed by people who are, maybe their focus is not here. I am lined up with Augustine. I'm lined up with Calvin. And I'm not a Calvinist, I'm not an Augustinian. But on these issues, which are the central and essential issues of faith, we are all lined up, and boy, that feels good! (Sigh of relief.)***

D.J.: It sure does. It's a song that, as they say, you can 'hang your hat on,' I

suppose. You can say, "This is me!" you know, "This is what I believe!" And you've put it to music so well. We're gonna play that in just a moment.

D.J. (to listeners): "Creed," coming up next, by Rich Mullins.

D.J. (To Rich): Rich, we want to thank you, for takin' some time out of your day to share with us here in St. Louis, and we can't wait 'till you get here Saturday for the two shows at 3 and 8 p.m. at the Westport Playhouse.

> ***Rich: Yes, I'm really looking forward to that.***

D.J. (to listeners): All right, Rich Mullins, thanks so much for joining us today, and we will talk to you Saturday. Thanks, Rich.

> ***Rich: Thanks.***

D.J. (to listeners): It's is twenty-eight minutes after 8 o'clock. This is what Rich Mullins believes. It's "Creed" on 104.9 FM.

(D.J. plays "Creed.")

D.J. (to listeners): Today's Christian radio, 104.9 FM, WCBW, Rich Mullins, with 'Creed.' Rich Mullins, our special guest this morning on 104.9 FM, and it was good to talk to him. And uh, he's an interesting fellow.

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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A Ragamuffin's Oz

kidbrothers.net/interviews/ccmdec93.html

Holly Halverson

> *Interviewing Rich Mullins is like looking through a pinhole at the Land of Oz: There's so much color to see and only a small scope of time in which to gather it and ask about the vividness you're peeking at. And just as an encounter in Oz changes the visitor forever, a session with Rich leaves you with fresh focus; you find yourself repeating not "There's no place like home" but "There's nothing like holiness; I need more holy life." In conversation, Rich Mullins is funny and serious, quick to point out his own humanity and surprised if you spot something loftier in him, but above all he is infectiously awe-filled about the God he laughs, writes and sings about.*
>
> *Appropriately we talk about that God, in Rich's private Oz in Wichita, Kansas, over Diet Coke and newly hung drywall in his attic apartment. Rich is a student here, and he divides his time between his double-major in music and education at Friends University, playing the French horn in his school's pep band, visiting recently married cohort Beaker, constructing and painting his apartment, wrestling with a golden lab puppy named Stevie, and working his artistic way with thoughts and words and music.*

Liturgy, Legacy, and Ragamuffins

> *First we get his thoughts about his latest project, A Liturgy, a Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band. So what's with the title? "It was just a funny phrase if you really want to know the whole truth about it," Rich admits. "It actually was a good idea, [but] I stumbled across the idea after I came up with the title. A liturgy is important to me because more and more I am becoming keenly aware of what a big part of my life ritual is. There are certain things I do every night before I go to bed, and if I do those things I have closure for that day. There area certain things I do in the morning to prepare to face the day. There are things that we [do] - they may be very simple ... But they remain the same."*
>
> *In many ways these rituals are much like the prescribed forms of worship,*

or liturgy; that have been passed down for centuries for formal services. "When I go to church, when I go to communion," Rich says, "I involve myself in something that identifies me with Augustine, that identifies me with Christ, that identifies me with nearly 2000 years of people who have come together once a week and said, 'Let's go to the Lord's table and enjoy the feast that he has prepared for us.' In that week I may have been subjected to a million billboards that try to make me identify with the thinking of contemporary society. But once a week I go back to church and [acknowledge that though] the shape of the world is really different now than it used to be, this remains the same: I still come to the Lord's table and say, 'Oh God, if it weren't for your grace, if it weren't for the sacrifice of Christ, my life would have no meaning, no life would have no real substance.' And I do that voluntarily."

Not so with legacy, he explains. "A legacy is something that is passed on to you that you have no control over. I had no say in that my great-grandpa was an alcoholic. I have no say in the fact that my grandpa and grandma moved from Kentucky to Indiana. There are all these things that have shaped me and have some effect on me. There are all kinds of things that are pushed on us and we have no say over. And they shape the way we see everything. Because I grew up in Indiana, in the Protestant tradition, in fact the Quaker tradition - that had a lot to do with biasing me. That's going to have an effect on the way that I interpret the Scriptures; that's going to give me my perspective. And I need to be aware of what my perspective is so I can both appreciate it and be a little distrustful of it."

The album begins and ends with thoughts on the land and legacy that are given him, "Here in America" and "Land of My Sojourn." For Mullins, being an American is an important aspect of legacy that deserves as thoughtful a response as other more personal aspects. His response to being an American in the '90s?

"I don't think you can do anything except love it. And I think love is a lot of hard work. Not so much because things are hard to love but because we're not very good lovers. I think love is something you have to give yourself over to, you have to just finally say, 'I will stop seeking a reason to love something and I will voluntarily allow it to be bigger than I am.'"

Speaking of love, what about the pals who played in the Ragamuffin Band? It all started when Rich read a "refreshing" book called The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning, which celebrates the glories of grace and is

written (according to the original forward) "not for the super-spiritual... for the muscular Christians who have made John Wayne and not Jesus their hero," but for "earthen vessels who shuffle along on feet of clay... for smart people who know they are stupid and honest disciples who admit they are scalawags." Rich says Manning's tome "articulated a lot of what I didn't have language for, and the Ragamuffin Band [which includes Jimmy Abegg, Reed Arvin, Billy Crockett and Beaker, among others] was just a group of guys I felt were particularly ragamuffinish."

Meaning? "They're not cute. They're slightly nuts. They have enough of a musical identity that they make lousy studio musicians 'cause they kind of are who they are, and that comes through in what they play. They're guys who have been real honest with me about who they are and about their shortcomings and about their failures and even about their failure to want to do any better. [Because] when I get down to it, the bottom line of every confession I have to make is, 'Lord, I don't really want to love you. I don't even have the desire to do that.' And unless God intervenes, I never will."

A Graceful Pursuit

Grace, God's intervention and his pleasure have been pursuing Rich a lot lately, he says. "I feel it increasingly. The longer I live, the more I have the feeling like God looks down, like when you've just bitten into a vanilla ice cream cone, you just get the feeling God's going 'Yes! He enjoys it, and I made his taste buds and I made vanilla and he's putting it together and he's experiencing what I created him to experience.' The amazing thing about the whole joy of Christianity is it's something you can't find, it's something that has to find you. That once we submit ourselves to God, the things of God chase us down like dogs, and you can't escape them.

"I think we can stifle the Spirit," he continues. "We can thwart the work of God in our own lives. We can choose to nourish that which should be crucified and ignore that which should be nourished, but God ain't done with any of us. In my own life, one of the ways I've seen the grace of God working not only to bring me forgiveness but to bring me real life and to bring me growth, is that I came to a point where I realized, joy wants to live here and I don't have room for joy because I'm full of cynicism. I came to a point where I realized I had to cut out nurturing the cynical part of me.

"I still struggle with that. I haven't successfully become entirely merciful. I

still tend to be very critical of people, projects, of an awful lot that I see, in ways that are embarrassing to me. I wish I weren't like that, but I have the feeling like a hundred years from now, I won't be."

A hundred years from now, what might this ragamuffin's liturgical legacy be? He believes it begins with honesty - hence the confessional nature of his music. "I generally live on the idea that everyone is pretty much the same," Rich says, "and that whatever is true for me is probably true of 90 percent of everybody else in the world." With songs like "Hold Me Jesus" and particularly at concerts, Rich says he's asking the audience, "Don't you ever want to say this, don't you ever want to look up to heaven and say, 'Hold me Christ, I'm shaking like a leaf?' Aren't you tired of being Mr. Together and aren't you tired of healing everybody and aren't you tired of being Mr. Holy Joe? Don't you ever feel like this? And if you can join me and sing here, that will be good for all of us.

"I guess I enjoy a book like The Ragamuffin Gospel not so much because it says anything I didn't know but because it puts into words things that I could never say. That's kind of my goal as an artist.

*"I think in a lot of ways, what I'm hoping to do in a concert, what I'm hoping with this album, with every album is to help [people] come to terms with the fact that they are human, with the fact that they are alive. You hope to challenge people a little bit, [saying] 'You've always seen things this way; look at it *this* way. Not because this way is better than that, but because it's a different view.' I can study the Virginia side of Black Mountain all I want, but there's still a Kentucky side to it, whether I like that side or not, whether I recognize Kentucky as a state or I don't. Things are not flat."*

But Rich will speedily admit that offering his viewpoint and guiding his listeners toward new ones are fallible proposals. "I always try to put Scripture references [in the liner notes of his albums] just because it doesn't matter what I say. I mean, ultimately, I can only tell you about my own experience. As a musician, I don't feel like I am the proper person to give dogmas. I think that what I can give people is an account of my own life, an account of how I've come to where I've come. I put the verses by the songs [to say 'This is where it's taken me but you go back and look at this and see what it says, and let it take you where it's going to take you. Bring your own perspective to this.'"

In other words, what Rich Mullins offers his audience is liturgy as seen

through his legacy - the best, though flawed, that any of us can give. "As a disclaimer to everything I've ever said or everything I ever will say, when it's all said and done we'll only have two things left to say: One is 'Forgive me' and the other is 'Thank you.' If you're really looking for answers, look past me. But if you're interested in how I got to where I am, I will be as honest as possible."

Looking through this pin hole, one might ask, which of the characters of Oz does Rich most closely resemble? All of them. He most certainly has a brain, a heart, courage. And most important of all, he knows where Home - the place of holiness - is.

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Music and More

Compassion International

Jon Rivers

[Here In America]

Jon Rivers: And I'm Jon Rivers. That was Rich Mullins from his Reunion album, A Liturgy, A Legacy, And A Ragamuffin Band . This is Compassion International's Music and More, featuring Rich Mullins.

I talked to Rich about many things, including how he came up with the album's title, A Liturgy, A Legacy, And A Ragamuffin Band .

> *Rich Mullins: The liturgy, for me, is a thing that you give yourself over to, that you voluntarily participate in, in order to identify yourself with a certain group of people. For example, there are certain groups of people, when I get together with [them] we play 'Up And Down The River.' It automatically happens. And it has to happen, or we don't feel like we're really together. There are certain things I do with certain friends, because that thing becomes an organizing factor in our friendship. There are certain things I do with my family that I don't do with other people. A good example, my family calls me one name, and everybody else calls me another. That, I think, is liturgical.*
>
> *A lot of people think that church is liturgical, I think that everything in life is liturgical. There is a certain time when you plant your seeds, there is a certain time when you harvest them. Life is set up, it's a series of patterns. I think, that because I am an American, I'm going to have certain biases. I'm probably going to lean more heavily toward a representative kind of government than I might if I had grown up in a, somewhere in Africa, where there was a chief, and the elders, and we simply obeyed those people. I'm gonna have a certain view of what a family looks like, I'm going to have these American biases. And these are not things that I chose. These are*

things that were given to me, or imposed on me, depending on how you want to look at that. That is our legacy.

Then the Ragamuffin Band - there is a book by Brennan Manning called The Ragamuffin Gospel, which Brennan Manning, his speaking and his books, and I've had the privilege of getting to spend a little bit of time with him, so his very person, has had a huge impact on me. Ragamuffin Gospel is kind of that thing where you go, let's not all pretend like we're all great. Let's say that the pressure is off. That you don't have to have it all together. Let's meet God, and allow God to meet us where we are. Maybe I'm confused, maybe I'm scared, maybe I'm beat down, maybe I'm a lot of things. But that does not change the character of God. That does not change the love that God has for me. That does not change the fact that He longs to be compassionate.

When we started making the album, I pretty much hand-picked the guys that were gonna play on it, because they were all guys who I knew to be very real Christians. Doesn't mean that they're dirty Christians, doesn't mean that they're messed-up Christians. They were all men who were not afraid to say, "I don't understand that." They were all men who were willing to say, "I have a struggle with that," or, "I don't have a struggle with that." They were all people who recognized that God had met them at the point of their need, that God had endowed them and empowered them with certain gifts that He had for them. And they recognized the goodness of God in meeting them where they needed to be met, and empowering them with His spirit when they did not deserve that gifting. But it's because God delights in them, because God loves them, because God is tickled pink with them. That He continues, not because we're great, but because of who God is.

And the guys that I played with are pretty much guys that I've known for a good while. They all have struggles. They all have hang-ups, they all have shortcomings, they all have talents, they all have gifts. They all have a faith, that even though it doesn't look like the kind of faith you see on tv, it's a very profound, and very down-to-earth, and I think a very spiritual faith.

So, here's our legacy, the fact that we have a cultural upbringing. Here's our liturgy, the fact that we voluntarily involve ourselves in the

services and little rituals between our friends, between the other people in the church, et cetera, and here's who we are. We're a bunch of ragamuffins. We're a bunch of people who don't really have it all together. We're a bunch of people with a bunch of half-baked ideas. We're a bunch of people with some real hang-ups, and some real high hopes, and some real struggles with cynicism, with anger, with the fear that God is not really who Jesus tells us that He is. And here, above all of that, here is a God who continues to look down, and continues to love us. Which, hopefully, everything in this album, everything in our legacy and in our liturgy, everything that comes from us who are ragamuffins will point to the fact that God is real. And His love for you is absolutely real.

[I'll Carry On]

[Compassion ad]

JR: This is Music and More, brought to you by Compassion International, featuring Rich Mullins.

RM: You know, a lot of people have this misconception that ministers and musicians, and people who daily are talking about Christ and Christianity and that sort of thing, really have no, or few, struggles. And I kind of had bought into that for a long time, thinking that, gee, by the time I'm in my mid-thirties I should be pretty much too old to be tempted by anything, and have really kind of had to come to terms with the fact that as long as I live, there will be temptations.

The whole image in the Scriptures that Christ uses about preparing the soil - I think the Word of God, which would be Christ, or if you're Protestant or Evangelical would be the Bible, is going to be fruitful. I mean it is already a very fertile little thing. Where the attention needs to be paid is to the soil that that's gonna be dropped in. And I think that He continues to break up our soil and pull out the stones and take out the weeds, those sorts of things. And that's the hard work. Any farmer knows, boy, you drop the seed, the seed will do its thing. What you have to worry about is the soil. And so, "Hold Me Jesus," I think I just kind of got to a point where I was going, man, I don't know if I can make it. I don't know if I can, I don't know if I'm going to be able to live this close to falling all the time. And, you

know, the words of Paul, where the Lord spoke to Paul and said, "My grace is sufficient."

[Hold Me Jesus]

JR: Rich Mullins and "Hold Me Jesus." From A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band. This is Music And More from Compassion International, featuring Rich Mullins, with your host, Jon Rivers.

Since early in his career, Rich has been interested in reaching out to others. Not just through his music, but in tangible, hands-on ways.

RM: It's interesting, because after my second album I was so disillusioned with Christian music, and with my own role in it, that I just went, kind of, wow, I really wanted to say something that was real, and that was authentic. And what I'm finding out about myself is that I'm trying to say things that are cute, and I'm trying to win an audience to me, rather than point an audience to Christ. And having become concerned about that, I realized, man, I really need to refocus - which, I think the story of my life is the story of refocusing. It's the story of setting down on a great road, on a great path, and then all of a sudden realizing, wow, I've really swayed. So I need to stop everything, I need to look at where I'm going again, and then get there.

So, that summer I got the opportunity to go to the Orient. It was the year that the Olympics were in Seoul. And there was a seminary in Korea that was really anxious to get their students really good at speaking conversational English. And so part of their plot and plan was to have some American come over and just hang out with students. So I got to go to Korea and hang out for a month, just talking with students. Then after I did that, went to Japan, and got to visit an old friend of mine there, and do some concerts, which was very, very interesting. Then we went to Thailand, which was really, of everything that happened on that particular trip, Thailand had probably the greatest impact on me.

When we got to Thailand we went up in the Golden Triangle. We were in the Wing Hang valley, north of Ching Mai. We were right by the Burma border. And all of a sudden, seeing the impact of Christianity on a Buddhist culture, and seeing the impact, not only of

Christianity as a theology, as a theological position, or Christianity as a moral code, or Christianity as a political idea, or as a philosophy, but seeing the impact of people who really have the love of Christ, and who respond to the call of Christ, to forget themselves and to go out and love other people, was one of the most impactful things that happened.

At the time we were getting ready to leave, we had been in a Chinese refugee camp. And I had played the dulcimer for them, and all that sort of thing, and they were so fascinated by that. And it was wonderful playing for the Chinese refugees, because of all the people I've ever played for, when I started playing the dulcimer, rather than sit there and listen, they all got up, and they would touch it, and they would, you know, while I'm playing. It was wonderful. They were so curious. They were so interested in what was going on.

And as we were getting on the train to leave to go back to Bangkok, this man came running up to my window and said, "You must come back! You have to come back!" And I said "Why?" And he said, "Because you have to be a teacher, you must be a teacher!" And I said, "Well, what do I need to do in order to do that?" And he said, "All you need is a degree from an American university." Well, I'm going for a degree from an American university now. I don't know that I will go back to Thailand.

And I started looking at my own life about that time, and going, wow, who has had the most impact on me? Was it all the musicians that I listened to growing up? And I listened to music growing up, I was real into pop music, the whole bit. I thought, was it those guys? Was it books that I had read? I know one book I read, the pastor at our church had given me a copy of Mere Christianity my senior year. And that had a big impact on me.

But the most profound impact that I ever felt came from people who just simply loved me, and were really willing to spend time with me. And everything else is kind of icing on the cake. So, I realized at that time that time, boy, a music career could be a fun thing, [but] it hasn't been so far - this was several years ago - and I really need to switch careers. So we came back, and I was due to go into the studio, and figured, "Boy, this is gonna be my last album, so I'm not

gonna be clever here. I'm just gonna say what I have to say, because I won't get another opportunity to say this." Because I had sold so few albums, and you have to sell, or nobody's gonna sign you. And that was the album that had "If I Stand" on it, "Awesome God" was on it, "The Other Side Of The World" was on it. I just picked the songs I had written, the ten songs that spoke the clearest to me, and put them on. And the irony of the whole thing is that that was the first album that people started buying.

JR: And I, for one, am glad that Rich took those trips, and came to that place, and continued recording. I asked Rich about his first trip overseas to view firsthand the work of Compassion International.

RM: Well, throughout all this I'm still, I've been a Compassion sponsor, and doing a presentation at my concerts. Just recognizing, you know, everyone can't go to Thailand. Everyone can't go to Peru. Everyone can't go all over the world, but we can still have that impact. And once again, I think it's a matter of, what you say to a kid when you sponsor them, is man, somebody really does love you. Somebody has really heard your mother's prayers, and really is answering. And you make them able to believe that there is a good God. And I think that's a very, very important thing. Compassion, the whole time I've been doing that, going, yeah, that's, that's nice, isn't it? But still I want to do a little bit more.

Well, I went on a trip with Compassion. And I'll tell you the honest truth, I had been, I think, as far as thinking-wise, behind Compassion the whole way, going, yeah, this is great, what a great idea, what a great way to operate. I appreciated a lot about your organization. But I got to Guatemala and actually met kids who had letters from their sponsors put in little boxes that were almost like shrines, that these kids had memorized the letters, and they would give you the letter and then they would quote it word for word, what was said.

And I talked to a mother of about three kids who are Compassion sponsored kids, and found out about how one of her children was stolen from her, and how excited she is that her children are getting an education. And that they might be able to do something besides live in front of a cement wall and make tortillas from about 3 in the

morning until about 9 in the evening.

And when I saw the impact that Compassion had on her, not just on the kids who are being sponsored, but on the people around them, when I talked to people who are not even yet Compassion-sponsored children but who were aware that there were people that had resources that were responding to the needs of those people there, all of a sudden I went, wow, this is - suddenly it switched from going, yeah, this is a great idea, to being kind of a passion of mine.

I was kind of going, I wish there was no one in the world who did not know that God loved them. And I can't talk to everybody. But I can take this little bit of money, like $24 a month, and, where that $24 a month may not mean the world to me, it might mean I have to give up, you know, an evening at the movies, or, I might have to give up a chewing-gum habit or whatever. That's not, that doesn't compare to the joy that I have from knowing, boy, this little bit of money has impacted, not only the life of the child who is directly receiving the sponsorship, but it has impacted the lives of the people around them. All of a sudden people are going, wow, what is this? This, plainly, is Christianity. This is the God of Jesus Christ reaching out to people who are in terrible need through His body here on earth, which is the Church.

JR: And that's us, isn't it?

JR: Welcome back to Compassion International's Music and More, featuring Rich Mullins.

I think my favorite song from Rich's compact disk, A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band, is "Here In America." And I talked to Rich about the song.

RM: Well, I wrote that, probably around 1976 or so. I was hitchhiking, and - normally I don't write a song in one sitting. Normally it kind of accumulates over a period of time. Like, I'll write a line or two, or I'll write a song and throw the song away, except I will find two or three lines that I really like and I'll save those lines.

It was just, I think it was after having been eaten by red ants and sleeping in a culvert that I really realized what a cool country this

really was. Just kind of went, everywhere you go, it's different. And everywhere you go, it's hard. I mean, you come to the Midwest, you watch those old - you read those old John Steinbeck novels about, you know, the Dustbowl. And we have a history of 200 years of desperation, of people hanging on for dear life. Hanging on, because they believe there's gotta be something better than this. And I don't think people would have left Europe and the other places they left to come to America, if there weren't some pretty bad situations over there.

And so, I think, one of the things that was compelling - when I was in, back in the 70's, I grew up in a fairly privileged home. I mean, I guess we were probably poor by most people's standards, but I did have a father and I had a mother who both still lived with us. I had a great extended family - I had grandparents, great-grandparents, uncles, aunts, you know, just everywhere. We had some real values. And we were never so poor that we didn't eat, you know, it wasn't like that.

And I think there was something real compelling - I had just finished some Steinbeck novel, and it was the first time that I took off on a hitchhiking venture that just went to nowhere - just kind of going, I kind of want to see the country, and want to see it the way John Steinbeck would have seen it - because I was a big fan of his at the time. It just hit me that way. And I think, at the time, it was also in a real desolate stretch of road where there was absolutely nobody around. And I tend to like people, and I tend to want people around me. And in that real aloneness, the realization that God was there, that was very comforting. So I was kind of going, wow, this is great!

[Here In America]

JR: Rich Mullins. "Here In America" from his album, A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band. You're listening to Compassion International's Music and More with Rich Mullins. I'm Jon Rivers.

I asked Rich about another song from his new project, "Hard."

RM: That was kind of my 'voter-anger' song. It didn't come out very angry on the tape, but it's a little more tongue-in-cheek look at the same thing. Just acknowledging - see, I think there's a big problem

in the church. I think that everyone thinks that if you have struggles in your life, it's because you're not really filled with the Holy Spirit, or you're not really reading your Bible daily, or you're doing something wrong. I think life, by nature, is a struggle.

You know, whether or not you believe in the health, wealth, and prosperity doctrine, the ideas of that have kind have polluted almost all of our thinking about Christianity. Where we think that a really great Christian is that Christian who does not struggle with temptation, that Christian who can't wait to get up in the morning and spend four hours praying and reading out of the book of Leviticus. We think, boy, that's what a really mature Christian looks like.

Well, I'm looking at Paul, kind of going, here's a man who obviously was filled with the Spirit, a man who obviously had studied the Scriptures, here is a man who had had an authentic encounter with the living Christ, and he prays to God and says, "Lord, I beg you to take this thorn from my flesh." (Which we don't know what that means, and you can guess anything you want to guess - I don't think it matters or we would have been told.) "Lord, I've been praying for you to take away this infirmity of mine, and you haven't." And God looks down at him and doesn't go, "Yeah, it's because you're so spiritually immature!" God didn't look down at him and say, "Well, it's because you don't have enough faith." God didn't look down from heaven at Paul and say, "Well, you know, if you would just get up earlier and pray a couple more hours in the morning," or "If you would just memorize another ten psalms." He didn't say any of that. He merely said to Paul, "Hey, My grace is plenty. My grace is sufficient."

And so, I think, many times we are afraid to drop our guard, because we're afraid that people will think that we are spiritually flakes. Well, the truth is that we are. And so are they. And we're all trying to fake each other out. And the song, "It's Hard To Be Like Jesus," is kind of like looking at yourself and going, "Whew, what a relief! I don't have to fake it anymore. I can admit that I don't always feel like not honking at the person who is stopped in front of me at, you know, won't go through the green light. I don't have to pretend it's not hard for me to make the best choices that I can make."

The honest truth is, it is hard. And it will probably remain that way for a good long time. Not that there's no joy in the Christian life. And I think, part of the joke of the song is the "His eye is on the sparrow, and the lilies of the field I've heard / and He will watch over you and He will watch over me so we can dress like flowers and eat like birds." I deliberately wrote that, because I think what the Gospel of Christ does, is it challenges us at every level.

[Hard]

JR: My extraordinary friend, Rich Mullins. From A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band, on Music and More, brought to you by Compassion International. I'm Jon Rivers. Thank you for joining us.

RM: One of the reasons I love Compassion is because it does give the average person - I think we all feel frustrated. And what Compassion does, is that it offers you the opportunity to have a positive impact. It gives you an opportunity to do something you wouldn't otherwise be able to do.

There are a lot of reasons I like Compassion. One is because they work with the local churches in the areas where they go, with works that are already there, helping to support. There are tons of people who are doing, who are already out there doing the work. It's just that there's not enough resources for them to really be able to dig in and do the work really well.

And what Compassion does, is it allows me to facilitate this work that is already going on. It involves indigenous people, which I really like the idea of people helping themselves, and me facilitating that.

I like the idea that Compassion does have some criteria for who they plug into and who they don't. That they do have a commitment, not only to the local church and to local works that are already ongoing, but they also have a commitment to Biblical integrity of the people that they're working with, that sort of thing. So I kind of go, as a strong believer in the autonomy of the Church and as a strong believer that the actual work of redemption, the work that Christ came to do, and that the Church, as His Body on earth, continues to do, I believe that happens through the church.

And I think a lot of times, in that we're Americans, we tend to have this mentality that says we need people specialized in special fields and let's depend on the specialists. Compassion somewhat flies in the face of that and says, no, let's support the organism of the church. It doesn't replace the church, which is one of the things that I really like about it. It doesn't replace it, it sort of undergirds it, and gives me the opportunity to participate in a field far away from where I live.

[Creed]

JR: Rich Mullins. On the trust factor involved in giving to Compassion.

RM: If I'm going to err, I would rather err in favor of Compassion than in favor of cynicism. If I'm going to waste one thing or another, I would rather lose $24 a month than lose my ability to believe that people can be honest, and that work can be done, and that lives can be changed. I would rather not have that 24 bucks and still have a faith than otherwise. And I don't - I think that Compassion gave me, before I started sponsoring a child, I asked them to see a financial report. Compassion was very open with me. They were, you know, responded very quickly. And there is still an element of faith involved in it.

You kind of have to go, I can't guarantee that every penny that was ever given the church, or ever given to a charity organization, certainly that was ever given to a government, was properly spent, but I can tell you one thing. If the government of the United States was run as efficiently as Compassion International, we wouldn't have the debt that we have. I'm convinced of that. And I think that they are very respectful of the money that comes in.

I find the story of the good Samaritan fascinating for that very reason. That however the story would have ended up, Christ went to the trouble to describe three people that passed up the man who was hurt. There were three people that passed him up, and Christ didn't say, this guy had merely been passed by a lot of people, but He described the people. And the good Samaritan did the right thing. You know, what we don't know is what happened to that man, when he came around. We don't know if he suddenly decided to love Samaritans. We don't know if he accepted Christ as his

personal Savior, we don't know if he learned to read, we don't know what happened as a result of the Samaritan's good actions. All we know is that there was a man who saw another man, who might have been his enemy, in terrible need, and he responded positively.

I think some day there will be a judgment, and I'm not trying to say that we can earn our way into heaven, I'm not saying that we can earn what Christ has freely given us. But when we identify with Christ, when we take on the name of Christ, when we become a Christian, I think that means that our lives should be infused with the character of Christ. And the character of Christ is that of a wildly, ridiculously generous and compassionate Man, who says, I will love you regardless of your response. I will love you. I will continue to hold my hand out to you, regardless of whether or not you grab it.

And so I think, as a Christian in my own fight against cynicism, what I have - the story of the good Samaritan has become more meaningful to me. Not because of what I know about the good Samaritan, but because of what I don't know about the man who was the recipient of his generosity. It says to me there is something in the character of Christ, which I as a Christian, He empowers me to love that way. Christ empowers us, the Spirit empowers us; Compassion merely gives us an opportunity to act on that empowerment. But it is the love of Christ that makes the difference.

And if a difference is gonna be made, I don't know that there's a 100% success, but I know that, when we act generously, when we behave in a compassionate way, I know that God looks down and goes, "Wow, people are still capable of faith. People are still capable of love. I'm so glad. I've made, I'm not always glad about what I've made here. But you have made me glad."

If we want to bless the Lord, this is the way to do it. He doesn't need our applause. What He, I think, must feel blessed from is when we actually participate in His nature. And so, the opportunities that these kids will be given as a result of having an education, as a result of being able to read, and being able to eat, even, how do you measure that? How do you weigh that? What kind of value do you put on that? And I kind of go, for $24 a month, boy, that doesn't put a lot of value on it, that's the best bargain in the world that I know of. Except for salvation, which doesn't cost us a penny.

JR: Hmm....Rich Mullins.

[Compassion ad]

JR: This has been Music and More from Compassion International, featuring Rich Mullins. I'm Jon Rivers, your host. Thanks very much for listening.

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WCBW Interview

kidbrothers.net/interviews/wcbw1993.html

Sandi (to listeners): I had the chance to sit down with many artists [during GMA week]. Rich Mullins was just one of them, but one that I was really looking forward to, because we've been hearing a lot about him going back to school, and that he's not gonna be in Christian music anymore. And I really wanted to find out what was going on, and had the chance to do just that.

He is a full-fledged college student now. He actually had to skip school to come, and he was talking how his professor said, "Now, you do this too much, you're gonna get in trouble." So, he said he's kind of regressing back to days of school. He is getting some degrees because his aspiration now is to become a teacher. He said he wants to teach elementary school on an Indian reservation, or, if not somewhere in the States, then perhaps overseas. He just has a real burden for young children, and thinks he can make a great impact on them.

I asked him what that meant to his music career; and he said, well, basically, it was over. He was saying "goodbye." He said, whereas the last several years he has been primarily focusing on music, and doing other things as hobbies, it's just going to be in reverse. He wants to focus on teaching, and doing music as a hobby. So, whether he will actually completely disappear from the scene or not, I don't know. My estimation and guess would be that he would continue to do projects here and there, as far as recordings, but he'll not do the touring and be at the forefront of the industry. But, I hope anyway, that he doesn't completely say goodbye.

He is very excited. I saw him and felt him to be very focused, very settled, and just a **real** peace that I had **not** seen in him for quite some time. So, I think, he knows what he wants. He's going to pursue it. And he's very excited about the possibilities of how God is gonna use him in the future. So, we'll continue to pray for him. So, here are a few minutes, in fact, the entire interview from Rich Mullins, and it's a little longer than some of the other excerpts that we've been running, but it was so insightful that I thought you may enjoy hearing it all. So, here are some words from Rich Mullins.

Sandi (to Rich): It is good to see you and talk to you again.

> *Rich: Um, it's good to see you [Sandi] again, and talk to you, too... (he is already laughing, then she begins laughing) ...even though I can only see you. And there might be people listening that I **can't** see, but it's good to*

> *talk to those people that I can't see, too. And I'm glad you [Sandi] are there to give me the opportunity to do that.*

Sandi: He does not need me at all! You know what I'm sayin'? I mean, like, he could just go off by himself. I am just, more or less, here for the fun of it...

> *Rich: Well, and it **is** fun. I mean, I'm glad you're here for the fun of it, 'cause you **are** a lot of fun. (You can hear someone in the background laughing.)*

Sandi: (Long pause. Sandi sounds dumbfounded, like he's completely gotten her off-track.) Rich, we saw each other down in the lobby a few minutes ago, and you were talking about the transition from touring and being a Christian artist, and then all of a sudden being back in the classroom and doing the homework scene. I mean, you're a full-fledged college student now...

> *Rich: Yeah, full time. (He laughs.) It really is weird to go, "Oh wow! I can't go out now because I have to do my theory assignment." (She laughs.) You know, it just feels really weird. And we're doin' all this analysis stuff. It's really interesting. I mean, **really** fun. I really do enjoy it, but it is definitely different than... you know, I think it's been good for me because it's nice to be on a schedule. And I actually eat approximately two meals a day, and have time to snack and stuff. And I eat about the same time all the time. And I pretty much go to bed at the same time, pretty much get up at the same time every morning. And when you're on the road, when you're touring, you never have any idea when you're gonna eat next, what you're gonna have to eat, 'cause you're always at the mercy of whoever is doing the concert. Whatever they bring in for you is kinda what you eat. And sleeping, you know, you may do the concert and then you drive. Or you may do the concert and then go to bed, and then you may have to get up the next morning at five or six, sometime like that, to drive to the next place. So I think it's been really good for me to be in a situation where I can have some kind of a routine.*

Sandi: I was thinking about that. I was thinking of some possible questions, the whole idea of normalcy, getting back to that. You know, some people aren't gonna understand that.

They're gonna say, "Boy, if I could have one **dream**, it would be to do what you do, and here, you're goin' back to **school**!" You know, for some I imagine that's pretty hard to understand. How do you respond to that?

> *Rich: Well, I think being able to do what I've had the opportunity to do **is** kinda like a dream. I mean, it really **was** a blast. But you kinda get to a place in your life where you go, "Yeah, this is fun, and this is somethin' that I'll be thankful for the rest of my life, but this isn't what my life is about. And this isn't who I really am." I mean, it's a **part** of who I am, I suppose. And I kinda see the whole music career thing as being God's mercy to students... 'cause I think I'm gonna be a much better teacher at forty than I would have been at twenty. And so, I think He sent me down this little detour, gave me twenty years to grow up a little bit more. And I think, now I'm a little more mature. I think I'll be able to handle being in a classroom. (He chuckles.)*

Sandi: Two questions off of what you just said. And the first, you are talking about music as, "It **was** fun," and, "It **has** been." Is it really in the past now, or how do you view it where the future is concerned? And Michelle from Reunion just walked in, and so you have to respond now to her ears, too. (She chuckles.) I'm just kidding.

> *Rich: Well, in terms of career **choices**, it's kind of a past thing. There was a time when I chose to work real hard at being a musician, which meant that I spent most of my time either touring, or doing an album, or something like that. And the whole time I was doing that, I was... a lot of times, one of the things that I really enjoyed doing when we were on tour was... you know, you'd meet people after a concert, and they'd say, "Hey, we have a Bible study. Could you come to the Bible study tomorrow morning?" It was always a **blast** to go to some little college, or some little high school... and I don't mean 'little' like some 'dinky, insignificant', I just mean, just some high school or some college and meet with a group of, maybe half a dozen to a dozen people and do a little Bible study thing. That was always kinda fun. And I think it's just gonna flip-flop. I think I'm going to be teaching as a **career**, and doing music kind of as a little bit of spice, you know, when you get a little too bored. 'Cause I think it **will** be boring to live in the same place all the time, and see the same people every day, and all that. I think people who are able to live years and years and years in a routine deserve some kind of a big medal for some kind of courage that I don't have.*

Sandi: Well, I think we can gather from that, then, that your musical epitaph isn't being written here, that we'll continue to hear from you. And that's our hope if it's what God's will is for your life. You also said something about, "That's not what life is **about**." How would you sum up what life is about?

> *Rich: Well, (You can tell Rich is smiling.) I...*

Sandi: Is that deep? That sounds **deep**

> *Rich: (Really laughing now.) See, and people say... this cracks me up about interviewers, 'cause they always go, "Wow, you're so **heavy**, we don't know if we can play this on the radio!" And then they ask me, "Well, what is life all about?" (He laughs again.) You know, I kinda go, "Gee, I don't know. What do you want me to say? **Popcorn**?" (Someone in background is laughing.) I think life is about living. And this elder - one of the elders at my church, and I, have just started this big study on the word 'meekness.' And, not only the **word**, but the whole idea of meekness.*
>
> *And one of the things we've come across is the whole idea that a **meek** person is a person who accepts what God sends to them, and doesn't grumble about it, doesn't complain. And I think that life is a terrific gift that God gives us. And that, in this big, cool package, there are all kinds of little details, that, when you first pull 'em out and look at 'em you're not sure what to make of 'em. And I think that a meek person is a person who accepts what God sends their way, accepts their calling in life, accepts the opportunities that they're given, accepts the, you know, physical realities of getting older and their knees going bad and their gaining weight and all of that, (He laughs) that sort of thing... [A meek person] accepts this and makes the most of it, and goes ahead, and realizes that God is doing something in our lives that we don't understand. And so, I think life is about **living**.*

Sandi: I know that you write a lot. You've been referred to as a modern poet, who just happens to, you know, then put those words into song. I **know** you won't stop writing, will you? I mean, you write as, more or less of a hobby, in addition to the music, don't you?

> *Rich: Yeah. I think writing is a **blast**. And I think it's something that you either do or you **don't** do. And being published was an accident for me, you know, I never intended to be published. And I don't intend to quit writing. (He laughs.) You know, it's fun. It's fun to be published. It's fun to see your name in print and stuff like that. But, that's not the **real** fun. I mean, the **real** fun is... I wish everyone could experience what it's like to be hanging out with, like... we, in fact, wrote "Boy Like Me, Man Like You" there in St. Louis. And Beaker and I were sittin' on the side of this hill at this hostel where we were staying, and our dogs are wrestling, and we're talkin' about how, if we were kids, we would be wrestling too. And, just that whole **vitality**, you know, all that stuff. And then we were talking about Christ being a kid, and we just had this terrific conversation. And a lot of that conversation had to do with being thankful to be **alive**, with being thankful that God has given us the gift of life. And that, for me, is a million times more fun than **even** the terrific stuff that has come about as a result of what we did. The **process** is, for me, more satisfying than the product.*

Sandi: Where will you be teaching, Christian college, secular college? And what kind of coursework will you hope to teach?

> *Rich: I'm hopin' to teach on an Indian reservation, K thru 12. Or, if that doesn't work out, maybe go to Central America or something. And I just want to teach... you know, I have **no** idea actually, where I'm gonna end up. I think I'm just gonna go wherever I get a big **chance** to go, 'cause that's... I don't think I want to teach college though, because I don't think I'm... I mean, I think I'm **smart** enough, but I don't think I take it seriously enough to be a college professor. I think you have to be really, you know, serious about your subject. And I don't think many people have an attitude about music like what I have, that are teaching in colleges. (He chuckles.)*

Sandi: (Sandy chuckles, too.) As a wrap-up question, then, I know we need to run... if we asked a lot of listeners what they have gained, or been able to receive from your music, I think we could come up with some pretty wonderful answers. What do you think you have gained, or will take with you, from your songs, or just being in the music industry and ministry?

Rich: (A pause) Oh, boy, I... (pause again) I don't even know how to answer that. 'Cause I'm... the last, you know, seven or eight years that I've been doin' this, have been the kind of thing I never expected. And have been terrifically more rewarding than I ever would have... I mean, if I would have known how cool it was gonna be when I got into it, I would have... (pause) I don't know what I would have done different, but it's consistently hit me as a surprise.

One of the things I think that has been wonderful about being involved in the Christian music industry is just the ***people*** *that I've got to meet. I've got to meet some* ***really****... it's been* ***really*** *fun. I like to meet people before and after concerts. I like to know who I'm singing to, or whatever, and I've met some* ***amazing*** *people, just kinda hanging out afterwards and stuff. There are... I've always been kind of hyper-critical of the Christian music industry, and probably rightfully so. I think there are a lot of weird things about the industry, but* ***within*** *that industry, I've met* ***so*** *many people who have taught me such a great lesson in saying, "I am not responsible for the industry. I am responsible to answer the call that God has put on my life. And God has called me to be a D.J. in* ***this*** *station, at* ***this*** *time, and* ***that's*** *what I'm gonna be. And yes, I have problems with the industry, as well as you do, but I can only be faithful here.*

I have to answer for myself." So, I'm very thankful for the people that I've got to meet. Especially radio people, I tend to especially like, 'cause they tend to be real extroverts, and they are a lot of fun. I've got to work with some ***amazing*** *people. I've got to see some very talented and very dedicated people, and that's all been very fun. There's something* ***amazing****, like watching Billy Crockett play a guitar. There's something* ***amazing*** *about seeing a guy who has developed a skill that far, that he can sit down and* ***do*** *what he does, is truly an* ***amazing*** *thing. And not many people ever get to see that. I mean, they get to hear it on the record, but when you* ***see*** *somebody, you go, "This is what makes that happen!!!?" You go, "Wow!!! This guy's doin' that by* ***flicking*** *strings and puttin' his fingers in certain places." So, that's kind of been a wonderful thing.*

Possibly *the thing that I think has been the most rewarding has been my relationship with Compassion International. One of the things that I think are somewhat* ***tangible*** *for me, are the people who have signed up to sponsor children after our concerts. And there are times when I get kind of, when I go, "What is this* ***about****?" You know, wow, I'm gonna go out and*

> *show off for another three hours here, and sometimes I feel embarrassed at how much I **enjoy** it. And then I feel kind of **bad** afterwards. And then, sometimes when I feel **really** bad, I just get out those sheets, and I go, "Well look, here is, you know, a few hundred kids that **maybe** are going to **eat** tonight. And I don't... I'm not responsible for **that**, but what I was able to do was give people an opportunity to respond to a real need and people have responded. And for me, that's possibly the most, like I said, "tangible", the most immediately tangible, reward for what I've been able to do.*
>
> *So, there are **many**, **many** more rewards than I can count. And I think I'm not even smart enough to know how blessed I've really been by all this. But I think, someday when I'm an old, some nasty old curmudgeon rottin' away in a nursing home, I'll probably look back and remember this and see it more accurately than I'm able to see it now. And I'll probably be more thankful.*

Sandi: Rich, it's been good sharing with you again today. And just as maybe a way of wrapping up, you seem real **focused** today, real at peace, and that's **tough** after all these interviews, I know. But, you know what I'm saying? Just in our conversation, just the sense of real... I don't know if you even know what I'm talking about or not, but just a real **vision** and a sense of focused-ness that maybe has not been as evident as it is right now.

> *Rich: Yeah, I think I'm growing up a bit. I mean, like I said, I was given twenty extra years of kid-hood by being a musician. And so, I think I'm ready to get to some serious work now. And that feels good to me.*

(Sandi plays "Growing Young")

Sandi (to listeners): Rich Mullins' "Growing Young", on the new 104.9. I think he may be growing up some, as he said in his interview, as well. Hope you enjoyed that time with him. Let's hear another song from Rich Mullins.

(Sandi plays "Sometimes By Step")

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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WCBW Interview

kidbrothers.net/interviews/wcbw1993b.html

Sandi: One of your artists is Rich Mullins, who is a favorite here in St. Louis, very popular, and nationally, I'm sure. Tell us, though... it seems as though we've been hearing things about... that maybe there is a twist, or a change coming in his career, less touring and all that. What's goin' on with Rich?

> *Reunion rep: Well, basically, last year he said that, "I'm not gonna do any more of these three-, four-month runs," where he runs out and does, you know, 60 shows, or 40 to 60 shows in one shot. And he said, "You know, I really want to go back to school. I really want to continue in music. And I..." He's real involved with the camp that he does on weekends. It's kind of a retreat-type thing, and he's real focused on that. And so, he's back in school in Wichita, so obviously that takes a lot of his time right now. And, we're continuing on working The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 2, which is his current record. And then, when his summer break comes along, (Sandi laughs) we'll get back into the studio and start working on the next record. And so, there's definitely a future in music for Rich. He just has other ambitions, you know?*

Sandi: Sure.

> *Reunion rep: A lot of times, people just want to do records, or they want to tour a lot. And he's saying, "Wow, I've been out on missions trips, and I've been around. I want to teach. I want to teach music." And so, he has a lot of priorities in his life that he wants to do and accomplish while he's here. So that's what he's doing. And his next record they're talking about is a 14-song record.*

Sandi: Wow!

> *Reunion rep: And it's kind of gonna be an **event**, I think. I mean, he wants to bring in real good musician friends of his and just play. Not come out all*

> *polished and, "Oh, go back and do that line again. It's not quite right." He wants to say, "This is what we do, and this is... you know, we just sat down and played, and we recorded this for you."*

Sandi: Kind of like a live studio sound?

> *Reunion rep: **Kind** of; but it'll be probably a **little** more polished than that, because I'm sure they'll go back and re-do some things.*

Sandi: Right.

> *Reunion rep: But just not to the extent of **so** produced, and that kind of thing. Bring in Reed Arvin, who's produced all of his records, **great** piano player. Maybe Jimmy A, come in and play guitar, and some things like that. It's all real initial right now, and they're still throwin' ideas around. And he was talkin' about titling it. He loves long titles... (Sandi laughs)... "The Liturgy, the Legacy, and the Ragamuffin Band." (They both laugh.) Gosh, I hope I can say this... but anyway, that may not all come out...*

Sandi: Right...

> *Reunion rep: So if it's not ever in the store, don't blame me. But he wanted to come out and do some of those traditional hymn-type songs on half his record, and half his record, do his typical songs that he likes to write. And so, it could be an interesting concept for a record. Leave it to Rich to come up with something interesting, because he sure... he certainly can.*

Sandi: Yeah.

> *Reunion rep: He always does.*

Sandi: I was just gonna say, if there's one thing you can expect from Rich, it's the

unexpected. Because he is incredible.

> *Reunion rep: It's true. He travels with his dogs in his truck, and... (Sandi laughs) drives all across the country in his pick-up. Yep, (Sandi still laughing) doin' concerts. And comes out with no shoes on. He **does** own shoes (Sandi laughs again.) And he **does** own jeans without holes in them. People have asked me that. (Sandy's still laughing.) So, trust me. Got his hair cut... he has short hair these days.*

Sandi: I didn't know that.

> *Reunion rep: Yeah... so he looks like he did back in the early days on those records. We're kinda teasing him, but don't tell him that. He doesn't like that.*

Sandi: Huh, how wild! Well, you know, I would love to be a like a little fly that flies around Wichita...

> *Reunion rep: Yeah, yeah...*

Sandi: You know, he's goin' to school now. I heard that he's actually leading the choir in his church.

> *Reunion rep: Yes, and let me tell you his degree...*

Sandi: Oh, okay, go ahead.

> *Reunion rep: It's going to be in music-ethnicology. I don't know. I **do** not know.*

Sandi: What does that mean?

> *Reunion rep: Well, the other thing that he said about it was that he wants to teach music on a reservation. He has a real interest in Indians and that type thing. So... but he really wants to study the history of music, and, I mean, you can hear on his records, just all the different instrumentation that he's so interested and intrigued with.*

Sandi: Right.

> *Reunion rep: And, we gave him a hammered dulcimer recently this year.*

Sandi: I heard that. Yeah!

> *Reunion rep: And he was just shocked. His had gotten damaged on the road. And I mean, you don't just go out and buy a hammered dulcimer.*

Sandi: Right.

> *Reunion rep: So there was a guy, I think it was in North Carolina, that hand-makes those. And so we presented him with one. And it had an extra octave and we didn't even know. He's like, "Wow, this has an extra octave!" (Sandi laughs.) And we're like, "We knew that all along." (Both laugh.)*

Sandi: There probably wasn't anything you could have gotten, a plaque or an award would have meant nothing to him.

> *Reunion rep: In fact, I **did** give him one for his Number One song, "Sometimes By Step", at the same time. He left it behind.*

Sandi: (laughs) Did he really?

> *Reunion rep: There you go. That's Rich Mullins. (They are both laughing.)*

Sandi: That's neat. That's great.

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WCBW Interview

Interviewer: Hey, how you doin'?

> *Rich Mullins: I'm doin' pretty good.*

Interviewer: I hear you're just getting back from Europe. How was that? And tell us how the response was over there.

> *Rich Mullins: Well, it was a blast. We were there all summer. We were there for three months, and we spent the first month in Ireland, which is... I have no way to describe Ireland.*

Interviewer: Violent? No, no that's the other side of Ireland, I'm sure.

> *Rich Mullins: No, it was wonderful. The people were wonderful. We just had a great time. Of course, it's kind of...*

Interviewer: Let me interrupt with just one thought on that. You know, most people think of Ireland and they think of the, Northern Ireland, I guess, as far as the violence, the explosions, the terrorism. Did you encounter any of that this week, or this past summer?

> *Rich Mullins: No, in fact the violence is limited to just a few blocks. And there **are** ousts, terrorist acts, and that kind of thing. But there are plane crashes in the United States, so I figure you are going to die sooner or later. I certainly wouldn't be in support of acts of terrorism, but you kind of go, "If I died in Ireland, I think I would be happy with that."*

Interviewer: Yeah, okay, I understand that.

> *Rich Mullins: But I didn't worry too much. It was kind of weird. We accidentally crossed the border into Northern Ireland one night late, and it was a little bit of a weird feeling, having guys aim guns at your car.*

Interviewer: Wow! But as Christians we shouldn't worry as much. Still, I'm sure you sweated just a little bit...

> *Rich Mullins: Well, I'll tell you, I look forward to heaven, and I can't think of a single problem that Christ coming back or my dying wouldn't solve for me. But I like being alive awfully much down here, so I'm certainly not going to do anything to hurry the process forward.*

Interviewer: How was the reception in Ireland, and then, once you were in Europe? We want to hear about that, too.

> *Rich Mullins: Well, Ireland was great because they really like music. In fact, musicians live tax-free in Ireland.*

Interviewer: I'm surprised that U2 ever left the country, then.

> *Rich Mullins: They still live there, so they don't pay taxes. The Irish people really like music. And because so much of my music has an Irish influence and they're very proud of their Irish heritage, we were very well received, as well as by many of the... most of the time we didn't have a Christian audience... many of the people all over Europe. There is such a darkness there. It's really kind of an oppressive place, and people were very anxious to find out about Christianity. When we were in Hungary... we spent much of our time in a school in Hungary, where, I think almost nothing could... none of the kids were Christians, even professing Christians... and we spent most of the time hanging out with some kids and answering questions. And most of the questions had to do with God and Who He is. So there's a real curiosity.*

Interviewer: It's also interesting, Rich, that even though there are so many churches in Europe, it's just not **there** as far as a personal relationship with Christ. It's more of a 'non-personal God' type approach of church, isn't it?

> *Rich Mullins: It's not a Judeo-Christian kind of God. And that's a very depressing thing. One very frightening thing in Northern Europe is their view of God. They picture Him as 'the Eagle', [that God is beautiful and majestic. They have an immense reverence for Him, but think of him as living way above humanity. He looks down and watches us closely, but is not right here in the midst of our lives giving us free access to Him at all times. They use the eagle quite a bit in their architecture for that reason.] The architecture is fabulous, and there is **such** an order, and thinking about it just... there is so much, it's such an educational tool, and such an opportunity for parents to talk to the kids. Because the architecture of these churches is based on Christian thinking, on the idea that there is order in the universe, that there is symmetry and there are asymmetrical things within that symmetry, and there's all this stuff going on...then we went to an art academy and looked at some of the modern art, which was full of chaos and violence and confusion. And it was, not only was it 'not beautiful' to look at, but it was not even 'good' violence.*

Interviewer: Right. Well, it sounds like it was a life-changing trip for you. And as far as the reception, you felt like people really opened up in parts of Europe as well, then, not just in Ireland?

> *Rich Mullins: Right, all over. The Christian people who are in Europe are so outnumbered. And their fate is... in this country we have Christian radio, we have a lot of Christian music, we have a lot of things that tell people, "It's okay to be a Christian. You're not alone." Over there, they don't have that. They are very anxious to find out that they are not alone in their faith. So it was really fun to get to talk to Christians and say, "Where we live, there are a lot of people who believe like you do. Maybe you're crazy, but you are not alone."*

Interviewer: Sounds like the Lord really blessed that trip, Rich. What are your plans now that you are back in America? What's next?

> *Rich Mullins: Well, I'm finishing up a degree in music education and hoping in about three or four years to be a school teacher.*

Interviewer: Okay, you're serious about this?

> *Rich Mullins: Yeah!*

Interviewer: And obviously in music, right?

> *Rich Mullins: Yeah.*

Interviewer: Okay, I know it's a... well, it would be a stupid question, but I've got to ask.

> *Rich Mullins: That's what interviews are all about!*

Interviewer: As a teacher, Rich, you are going to be educating people, as far as what aspect of music, from a Christian standpoint?

> *Rich Mullins: Well, I think there's only one thing anybody teaches, and that is character. And I think that whether you are teaching history, math, or biology, or music, what you are really doing is, you are helping to shape the character of that person who is your student. And music is such a wonderful teaching tool, because while you are developing musical skills, that student can learn a lot about discipline, cooperation.*

Interviewer: As far as the aspect of the recording, will you balance the two?

> *Rich Mullins: Yeah.*

Interviewer: Good, I'm glad to hear that, because we really enjoy your music, and of

course, have been playing it for quite some time. Love your new single, 'The Just Shall Live.' Has a good message in it.

> *Rich Mullins: I am so glad you like it. Because that's the one song on this album that I... when it's all said and done, you listen back to your work and you kind of go, "Boy, did I say anything?" And that's the song that always jumps out at me as being something that really needs to be said today.*

Interviewer: Do you have any comments on Ross Perot?

> *Rich Mullins: Oh, is he back in the race?*

Interviewer: Still waiting on the word.

> *Rich Mullins: Well, I just think it's a shame that, out of a country with the population our size, we can't come up with a single candidate that is worth voting for.*

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Fire by Nite Video

[Mr. Excitement, at Camden Yards - home of Baltimore, Orioles, searching for Blaine Bartel.] [Video intro]

Blaine Bartel: Hey, welcome to Fire By Nite. We've got a tremendous program. In fact, the title of our program this time is called Broken Home, Broken Heart. We're gonna be talking about the impact of divorce upon the American teenager. Our special guest is Rich Mullins, and, as you can see, Mr. Excitement. Lee Wilson, who usually fills the space on that couch right over there, is not here; and I'll tell you why. Lee is on location. He's gonna be bringing us a very special interview with one of the Baltimore Orioles - all the way in Baltimore, Maryland. Now, Brad, I was actually supposed to be there with him interviewing this professional baseball player. Is that right?

Brad: Right.

BB: But, I couldn't be here - be **there** - because I had to be here doing this, right?

Brad: That's right.

BB: That's right. I'm committed. Now, does Lee, does he know I'm not gonna be there?

Brad: Not sure.

BB: Okay. Alright. We'll have to maybe check on that. So, a lot of great things on the program - wonderful stuff. In fact, this program is so good, even the credits are gonna be exciting. We'll be back.

[Skit]

[Promotional 'commercial' for Fire By Nite Summer Youth Camp]

BB: Alright. [crowd cheers] Alright. We're back. You know, I read a statistic the other day that was very interesting. It says that 79% of American teenagers say it's too easy to get a divorce. Think about it. Kids today are saying, "Hey, it's way too easy for my parents to break up." And you look at the television ads today, and it really does look that way. They advertise, you know, divorce. You can get a cheap one for $79 if it's uncontested.

I think one good thing that we might do in this country is put as much into a divorce as we do into marriage. I mean, we spend thousands of dollars in getting married, buying a ring,

sending out invitations. Think about it. If we did the same thing for divorce - you had to send out invitations [to] all of your friends and family, invite everyone to be there [to] witness your new broken vows, and tell everyone to come, you know - I think the divorce rate would decline. It's just too easy today to break those vows, and I'll tell you, it is influencing our generation.

And parents, I want to just speak to you for a minute - you that would dare to watch Fire By Nite. I want to talk to you. You are influencing your kids. I've had a lot of people come up to me because we're involved in talking to young people. [They] say, "Hey, can you believe what these athletes are doing to our kids? You know - the Pete Rose scandal, and the thing with Magic Johnson, and all these other athletes that have got involved in drugs - such a negative influence upon our teenagers." But, do you know - in my, I don't know, ten years of traveling [and] ministering to young people - I've never had one teenager come to me and say, "Blaine, I really want you to pray for me, man. I'm really going through a hard time." [Where I've said,] "Well, what is it?" [and they respond,] "Oh man, Pete Rose, man, it's just, oh man, it's just, oh, man, I just can't get over it." I've never had it happen. But, I've had one after another - every time I go out - say, "Man, I can't hardly live. I'm goin' through one of the hardest times in my life, because my parents broke up." I want to encourage you parents to think about what you're doing to influence your kids. Your kids need you.

[Skit]

[Mr. Excitement still searching for Blaine Bartel]

BB: I want you to welcome to the program one of Contemporary Christian Music's best songwriters and most unconventional performers, Rich Mullins.

[Rich enters from side stage as Fire By Nite band plays Awesome God.]

BB: Alright. I guess our last good visit was in Guatemala - somewhere in Guatemala - and since then you've been to several other countries. [How Can I Keep Myself From Singing begins playing.] You've really got, I guess a vision, for world missions. It's a real part of your heart and in your music.

Rich Mullins: I just get a lot of opportunities.

BB: Do you find that in the different organizations you're working with on the mission field, that missions is becoming a more important thing in the church in America, and that things are really happening in other parts of the world?

RM: I don't know. I think there's, I don't know. I don't think it's enough of a thing.

BB: Yeah, it needs more all the time.

RM: I suppose.

BB: Yeah.

RM: I think when 90% of the world's preachers preach to 10% of the world's population, I would say there's probably somewhat of a [Blaine says 'mathematical'] problem that needs to be solved.

[A clip from the How Can I Keep Myself From Singing video]

BB: Rich, we're talking in this particular program about the impact of divorce upon the American teenager. What kind of family life did you have growing up?

RM: I had a very normal family. I grew up in a Norman Rockwell painting...

BB: Really? So everything was wonderful.

RM: ...with a little bit of Picasso, yeah. I mean, that was the great thing about my parents, was they both had hang-ups. They both had problems. I think there were times when they had a lot of trouble getting along. But, they believed in, that they said they were gonna do; and so they just did it. I mean, it was never like [pause], they considered murder several times. They've confessed...

[Everyone laughs]

RM: ...And it's really great; because my dad died last summer and my last memory of my father is [pause], my parents had come to Nashville for the Dove Awards. And after the awards were over, we went back to the Opryland Hotel. I got 'em a room at the Opryland Hotel and they were really excited about that. And they're like in their sixties, right? So they are **Noooo** [with empahsis] - they are not pin-up types. I mean, there's just [everyone is laughing] and so, they're walking along behind me, and I'm talking a mile a minute, you know, walking through there, and I turn around and my parents have disappeared; and I thought, 'Oh wow, they're so old they can't keep up with me.' [Everyone laughing] So, I turned around and went to look for them; and they had stepped off in this little enclosed kind of a place; and they were standing there holding hands looking at each other. [Rich has a warm smile on his face. He seems to enjoy telling the story.]

BB: Oh really?

RM: You know? Like they were really in love.

BB: Yeah.

RM: And I think, my dad, when I was engaged a **long** time ago, I said, "Well, how do you know if you're really in love with somebody?" And my dad said, "Well, you will *never* know until you make the leap...

BB: Hmmm.

RM: ...and, I did not know that I loved your mother until I had been married to her for 20 or 30 years."

BB: Wow.

RM: And I think that's very wise. You know, it's really interesting. One of the **very** interesting things about divorce is, I was working with a group of young people - there were four of them - and two of them came from split homes, and two of them came from parents that had stayed together and that had honored their commitments. And, it was **very** interesting, 'cause we were working in a studio. They were working on an album, and one of the kids who came from a split home, whenever she was having trouble singing, she would say [Rich points to one ear.], "Oh, I think the bass singer is flat, and that's throwing me off." Or, she would say, [Rich points to both ears.] "There's something wrong in my mix, in my headphones." And she would clank the headphones around. It was **always** someone else's fault. She was **very** afraid of making a mistake.

The guy that came from the split home, his whole reaction was, "Why don't **you** just sing this, 'cause you're a better singer;" so he was tryin' to get everyone else to sing his part. And he wanted to just kinda back out. One of the girls that came from a home where there had **not** been a split, when she would make a mistake, she would call everybody in and say, "Oh wow, listen to this! This'll flip you out." And then she would play this **terrible** thing she did, and she would laugh her head off. And the guy that came from the home that had stayed together was the same way. He made a lot of mistakes. They all made the same number of mistakes. They all were very equally talented.

The two people, who grew up in an environment where they came to realize that love is not conditional, that some one loves you **not** because you're **worthy** of their love, or not because you're **cool** enough to love; somebody loves you, because it is in them to love - that they are **able** to accept you, and are able to support you

even when you're not doing your, what they think is your best. They were able to make the mistakes, laugh and go on; and finally get things right. The two people that came from a split home, I think since that time - 'cause I've stayed kind of in touch with all of them, and they've worked through some of those insecurities, and they've worked through some of those problems, but it was much harder for them. So I think there's a reason why we were created to be monogamous. [They both laugh.]

BB: You're single,

RM: Mm, hmm.

BB: And are staying, I guess, you have no plans to change in the next few months anyways.

RM: I have trouble getting a date. [Rich smiles.]

BB: Really?

RM: Let alone getting married. [Laughter]

BB: Okay. You don't, you don't fear marriage? It's just that your career is such that you just aren't able to settle down, I guess. Is that true?

RM: Well, I wish I could say that; but it **is** scary to think about.

BB: Really?

RM: Yeah, 'cause I just kinda go, "Wow, that's..." It's scary to me.

BB: Yeah, do you think young people, in your dealings with them, feel that same way? They look at all the marriages today that are breaking up, and saying, "Oh, I don't know if I want that."?

RM [nods his head]: Very much so. I think, in fact, a friend and I were just talking about it. About how confusing it is right now - not in terms of our faith, not even in terms of the information that we have. The information that we have is very negative. The information that we get says, "Don't do this." This is ridiculous. The faith - the Christian faith - teaches that love is possible, and that marriage is a good thing, and etc., etc. So, the information that we get from our culture, and the information that we get from our faith, are two conflicting things and we end up with all this confusion going, "Yes I know that it is possible that people can love one another, but wow! can I take that leap?," 'cause it is a big leap.

BB: Yeah. Well, you're gonna come back and do a song in a minute. What's the name of the song you're gonna do for us?

RM: "Sometimes By Step"

BB: Well, we're lookin' forward to it.

[Video footage of "Mr. Excitement" and crowds of people entering The Baltimore Orioles' Camden Yard. Also an interview clip of Glen Davis (Baltimore Oriole) telling how he came to know Christ and how he shares Christ is his daily life.]

[Sometimes By Step - Rich on keyboard, Beaker on guitar (black and white video clip)]

[A lady calling BB over the intercom. Mr. Excitement pleading with God to show him where Blaine Bartel is.]

[Friends (A short skit) - and musical introduction of characters: Blaine Bartel, Cathy Bartel, Lee Wilson, Vicciio Witty, Brad and Angie Witty, and John Witty.]

[A dramatization of a how a teen handles a divorce situation.]

[Fire By Nite Praise membership plug. Fire By Nite University of Youth Ministry (cassette series) plug (1-800-888-7856).

[Skit/Dramatization]

[Testimony of a teen who experienced his parents splitting up.]

[Blaine Bartel speaks about divorce. He reads a poem from a ten-year old girl who went through depression treatment after her parents split up. He speaks of the need to forgive those who have hurt us through divorce situations, etc. He speaks of the need for a supernatural love in order to obtain the power to have that spirit of forgiveness (Luke 17:3). He prays for those effected by divorce.]

[Dramatization of a woman grieving over her husband's grave. She speaks of how she misses him - how the years together were not always easy, but always worth working things out for the sake of the marriage.]

[Mr. Excitement still looking for Blaine.]

[Blaine Bartel is in Washington DC advertising for the next episode of FBN.]

[Mr. Excitement ticked off that he has still not found Blaine.]

[Blaine with audience thanking Rich Mullins and Glen Davis.]

[Fire By Nite band plays song as credits appear.]

Executive producer: Willie George
Producer: Blaine Bartel
Directed and edited by Eric J. Smith
Written by Tony Leech
Director of television: Keith Richardson
Audio: Kelly Ward & Jeff Cremeen
Camera operators: Stacy Ratliff, Tom Doerner, David Harder, Tony Leech, Monte Seaborn
Crane operator: Brad Davis
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Lighting: Monte Seaborn
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The Fire By Nite Band: Joey Smith, guitar; Mike Dinsmore, bass; Marcos C. Cruz, keyboards; Billy Estes, drums
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Rich Mullins appears courtesy of Reunion Records
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Original music score: Joey Smith, Kent Booth (1991 Gospel Bill Music, b.m.i.)
Fire By Nite theme written by: Todd Homme
"Friends" theme written and performed by: Kenny Marks (1991 Comatome Little Dude Music)

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CCM Magazine - June 1992 Interview

kidbrothers.net/interviews/ccmjun92.html

Step By Step

A Conversation with Rich Mullins

Brian Q. Newcomb

Rich Mullins took the stage for his GMA showcase with his hands stuffed in his jeans, while Billy Crockett and his band of studio players worked through the acoustic-driven "Boy Like Me / Man Like You," one of the opening songs from his two-album piece The World as Best as I Can Remember It. Before the brief concert was over, Mullins was playing a hammer dulcimer as he sang, the band was playing a pop arrangement that moved toward dramatic drumming from the Paul Simon school, and an African-American church choir was augmenting Mullins' vocals with gospel heart and soul. In this simple, bold, artful way, Rich Mullins unleashed a quiet, thoughtful revolution.

A couple days later, Mullins and I had occasion to enjoy a country breakfast at Nashville's landmark Loveless Cafe. We talked about growing up male, growing up in the church, and not really wanting to grow up at all. We drank lots of coffee and spoke of the world as best as we could remember it.

We talked about a life of serving God's church and its mission in the world, we talked about working in the world of contemporary Christian music, about making art that speaks honestly about humanity and tells the truth of God's dramatic love, and we tried not to bore my wife.

We also managed to talk about Mullins' latest album, Volume Two of The World as Best..., and about writing music that "accidentally" gets on Christian radio, about trying to make sense of your birth family, and making sense of God's church, the adopted family of faith. We tried to tell the truth - Rich was Earnest, I tried to be Frank - we talked about the importance of being Frank and Earnest. Recounted here are the highlights, as best as my

tape recorder remembers it.

> *BN - It seems that trying to encapsulate all you know about life into two albums is a pretty lofty goal. Did you get it all down in the two albums, or should we look for Volume Three?*

RM - I think sometimes I have a tendency to be a little overly idealistic and I want to see the world the way that I think it ought to be. I guess a lot of what the albums are about is saying "instead of starting out with a dismal view of the world, or a happy view of the world, what is there?" And let me see what is really there and maybe it'll have some effect on the way I view the rest of my life.

I didn't sit down and write 20 songs about the way the world really is, but it's kind of been the thing that I've been working on personally, which finds itself working out in your songs. It accidentally has an autobiographical feel. I think a lot of the songs on Volume Two are a little more adult-ish.

With "Step by Step," if I had to make an overall statement, it's that faith is walking with God. The biggest problem with life is that it's just daily. You can never get so healthy that you don't have to continue to eat right. Because every day I have to make the right choices about what I eat and how much exercise I need.

Spiritually we're in much the same place. I go on these binges where it's like "I'm going to memorize the five books of Moses." I expect to be able to live off the momentum. The only thing that praying today is good for is today. So, with "Step by Step" and "Sometimes by Step," it's not what you did, and not what you say you're going to do, it's what you do today.

> *BN - You've managed to get a lot of airplay, and by many standards you've become very successful at what you do. Still, there's this feeling that you're not all that comfortable with that reading of the way things are.*

RM - I'm afraid that in the Christian church in America there's this understanding that life has meaning basically with the success that God gives us in life. Looking at the scheme of God's history with people, success and failure are pretty meaningless. Meaning in life is somehow beyond the way that we measure success, and that's kind of a relief for me, to know that the weight of the world is not on my shoulders. For me there

needs to be a return to the doing of things for the sake of doing them, and not for the sake of being great at it. G. K. Chesterton said, "Anything worth doing, is worth doing badly." It took me a long time to get that, I thought he was just being smart. But, I realized that what he was saying was "So what; you're not going to get a job as a caterer - learn how to cook."

> *BN - Something I often hear when people mention your name is that you're celibate, like you're the Apostle Paul or Morrissey or something. I always figure that must be some kind of an excuse for not being able to get a date to the Dove Awards (laughter).*

RM - My take on this is, for those people who are too weak to handle celibacy, God gives a spouse. People who are too weak to handle a spouse, God gives celibacy. So, I'm pretty comfortable, and I wouldn't mind being married. Especially from 10 to 2. I'm happy..., but I also believe that if you're not happy where you are you're not going to be happy anywhere. If I have a problem, I'd like to be able to be aware of it before I get married, because I'd hate to enter into it with the illusion that if I get married I'll never be lonely again. Or the illusion that someone will always love me. I know a lot of very lonely married people.

> *BN - On your tour with Sparks you opened your show with an a cappella take on Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," arranged like The Roches. You've consistently used dulcimer and bag pipes and other instrumentation unusual to the pop song format. How interested are you in ethno-musicology, and why do you think that this thing works so well with Christian music audiences?*

RM - I really don't know. Lucille Ball once said that she got the roles she got because she would do anything; that other comedians wouldn't make the faces that she would make, and I kind of think that's the case with me. A lot of people have too much sense to do the kind of thing I'm doing.

I'll tell you where my original musical interests came. Growing up, I had piano lessons since I was real little. I had a very good music teacher, Mary Kellner, who not only introduced me to some of the great composers, but she was able to capture my imagination and make me excited about what I was supposed to be learning.

Now my dad was an Appalachian, which is a very polite way to say that he was a hillbilly, and in junior high I was always embarrassed about my dad.

He never dressed right, he never had a suit that fit him, and always had dirt or grease under his fingernails.

In my junior year of high school we went to a funeral in Kentucky where my dad had grown up. It was one of those times - people say to me "Did you ever have a born again experience?" and I always say "frequently." My dad, who wasn't a sentimental, gushy kind of guy, pulled off the road. We walked around for a bit, and my dad said, "This is all changed. Somewhere out here there was a swimming hole and a vine we used to swing out over the water on." And I suddenly realized that my dad had been a kid once. At the time the most convicting verse in the Bible was "Honor your father and mother." And I realize now that [that verse] means that if you cannot honor your father and mother then you can't honor anybody. Until you come to terms with your heritage you'll never be at peace with yourself. That was a real breakthrough moment for me.

So, what I needed to do was come to understand the Appalachian life, so that I could know more about my father, who had been a stranger to me all my life. When I went to college I was able to start collecting Appalachian music. After I got over that fear of spending 45 minutes listening to an album that wasn't pop or rock, I realized that there was a lot of terrific music in the world.

> *BN - Single-handedly you've brought the hammer dulcimer to the attention of a generation of Christian music fans who might not know of it's beauty.*

RM - For me, one of my greatest accomplishments that I'm most proud of is "My One Thing," which was written and performed on a hammer dulcimer, and went to Number One on pop Christian charts. How many hammer dulcimer songs are there - and this goes to Number One. That's weird.

> *BN - Early on you began writing with people like Amy Grant. I remember being pretty impressed by "Love of Another Kind." Did you originally want to be a writer who had hit songs?*

RM - When I came here, I was working with Randy Cox [now with Sparrow Publishing] and I touted myself as an artist. And I was very pretentious. Randy would beat me over the head and tell me I needed to write commercially: "If you're going to do art go to New York or somewhere else,

but this is Nashville."

I finally decided that instead of taking commercial writing as something cheap, I began to ask, "Can I say something in an easily accessible way, and still say something significant?" I don't want to sell out, to be a commercial writer. I want to be better than a commercial writer, I want to be better than an artist. I want to do both things. I want to say something significant. I still want to say what I believe and what I feel honestly, but I want people to be able to relate to it. That's kindof an impossible goal.

> *BN - You've had some wonderfully honest songs. What's one of your favorites?*

RM - My favorite song that I've ever written is "Elijah." It was like another breakthrough. I wrote it around the time when John Lennon was shot. He was a big hero of mine, and my great-grandma died about the same time. I began thinking about the influence both of those people had on my life, and they were dead. These two people would never know the impact they had on me; John Lennon I'm sure wouldn't care to know, but my great-grandma, I never got to tell her. But then I realized I don't have to tell her. She didn't do what she did to have some kind of an impact on me, she did what she did because that's who she was.

And I'm going to be dead someday too. That's the first song where I forced myself to dig under a lot of the cliches of the Christian faith. I wrote a song that said, "You know, someday I'm going to die, and I wanna die good." Prior to that I would have tended to write, "Someday I'm going to die and I will be resurrected," which I also believe.

> *BN - I've heard some funny stories about your shows. Like once in Chicago, you walked out barefooted before the lights dropped and just sat down at the piano and started to play before anybody realized you were on the stage and not just some roadie.*

RM - I find it embarrassing to be introduced. When I was in fourth grade, I got asked to play the communion meditation at church. I practiced and my piano teacher worked with me, which was cool because she was Quaker, and they don't even have communion. Anyway, I went back Tuesday to my lesson after I had played Sunday, and my teacher said, "How did you do?" and I told her, "Everybody said they loved it, everyone said I did great." And she said, "Well, then you failed." I was crushed, but she put her hand on

my shoulder and said, "Richard, when you play in church, you are to direct people's attention to God, not to your playing."

Ever since then there's something about "And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, Rich Mullins," and I keep thinking that Mary Kellner's going to come up and say, "Now Richard, when you play in church..." I'm enough of an egomaniac that I want people to go away and go, "Wow, he's great." But I may not be great enough to accomplish that... I know I can be humble! (great laughter)

> *BN - You make lots of literary references. How influenced is your writing by the things you read?*

RM - Well, what I write certainly isn't as good as what I read. The thing I find attractive in people I like to read is that they're just brave enough to say what they really think. I think we all get hung up in saying something that is unique, but we may miss saying something clearly, or accurately. It's like C. S. Lewis said, "The idea is not how unique your idea is, or how unique your expression is, the idea is to take what is common and to freeze it in a moment." And that's kind of what I relate to in the writing of other people.

My goal - the thing that I respond to in writing and the thing that I would like to accomplish - would be to say things exactly as they are; to give the most accurate description possible. So many people are distressed by [the song] "Jacob and Two Women," and I respond, "then the Bible must be very distressing to you."

I think that we live in a real information and answer oriented world, and the thing that I'm discovering from reading the Bible is that it's not always what they taught us in Sunday School. For instance, I was taught that Esther was a queen, but reading the account myself I've learned that Esther was the head harem girl. Our attempt is to make Esther into a nice woman, but that's not accurate.

Not a concert has gone by when somebody hasn't come up after "Jacob and Two Women" and said, "Man, I don't get that song." And I don't get it either, except that a man married two women and had his hands full. And I do think it's very lovely that the only child of his 12 sons that Jacob named was Benjamin. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin, only her second child. So here she is dying after giving birth, and she names him Ben-o-me,

which means son of my sorrows. But Jacob says, "I won't call him that, but I will call him Benjamin, which means son of my strength." As if to say to Rachel, "Your beauty is my strength. You are not just a beautiful woman, you are my strength."

> *BN - I keep hearing that you've given 10 years to your music and ministry, and that this is your last tour before you go off to serve God in mission work....*

RM - Well, I do intend to go back to school and finish my degree, it's either now or never. As I get closer to 40, I realize that there are a lot of other things I still want to be able to do in my life. I want to finish college and be able to teach music therapy to native American kids on reservations. That's such a high risk situation.

I love making records, it's a lot of fun. It's a little embarrassing but sometimes I think - and here's the worst ego statement of the day - "who'll do this if I don't?" It seems there are people who like what I do. And, I like being liked. I've had plenty, and if I were not able to do this anymore I would be happy. But I don't want to lock myself into or out of anything. I'm kind of aware that we're all capable of a lot more than we think.

It's a matter of priorities: [Frederick] Buechner says, "Your calling is the place where your deepest joy and the world's greatest needs cross." For me, the greatest joy that I have is knowing that I do have a Father who loves me, and that he doesn't love me in a passive way. That he loves me so much that he sent Christ to take away the guilt of my sin and that it is a real thing, that it really did happen.

If I will experience joy in this life it will be when I let other people know that there is a God who loves them, and he has taken away the sin that separates them. There is no greater joy than just that proclamation.

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Heart to Heart Interview

Heart to Heart Interview
Sheila Walsh
Heart to Heart, Christian Broadcasting Network
May 20, 1992

Announcer: The 700 club presents Heart to Heart with Sheila Walsh.

Sheila Walsh: Hello, and welcome to Heart to Heart. I'm sure you've heard other recording artists perform songs such as "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" and "Awesome God" that my guest today has written. He not only writes and records hit songs, but also feels a responsibility to be real, to tell the truth, to be genuine to his audiences. His latest album, The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 2, gives us a hint he spends time thinking about life. Here is Rich Mullins singing from the album the song, "Sometimes by Step":

["Sometimes by Step"]

Sheila Walsh: Really beautiful. Rich is such a true poet. His albums, The World As Best As I Remember It, Volumes 1 and 2, on Reunion Records. And I'm gonna tell you towards the end of the show how you can get a hold of those today. We'll give you a toll free number and you can call and order his CDs and tapes, they're great.

Please welcome, from Wichita, Kansas, Rich Mullins

That was beautiful. Really beautiful. I love your piano style when you play. It's really neat.

> Rich Mullins: Oh, thank you.

SW: I want you to imagine, if you will, that we were in Seattle, in a little café. Nobody bothering us, no gig to do, nobody pestering you. We just sat down to cappuccino. Somebody said to you, 'What's the most important thing... what are the most important things in your life?'

> RM: At any given moment it might be slightly different, but I would imagine that nothing would be more important than becoming fully who you were supposed to be. You know what I mean is? For me, that's what salvation is all about.

SW: Did you discover that by accident?

RM: Um, if you believe in accidents. Depends on if you're a Calvinist or not.

SW: Yeah, I'll bet that's true.

But I want to ask you, you're the same age as me. You're 36, and I'm almost 36. How are you different at 36 than 26?

RM: Oh, very different. Because I have failed enough that I've learned that It's not the end of the world to make mistakes.

SW: That's a big thing.

RM: Yes, so I'm not as threatened by my own failures as I used to be. I used to be a lot more ambitious than I am now. I think I used to really want to... you know, I was a bit of a go-getter and very uptight about everything.

At 36, you kinda sit back and you kinda go, wow, I've made so many really bad mistakes. And I've been around so many people who've made a lot of really dumb mistakes. And every morning the sun comes up anyway. So, ehhh, it's not that... I think when you stop being afraid of failing, you become a lot more free to succeed.

SW: Within the Christian music thing, the whole industry, the Bible tells us that we shouldn't think of ourselves more highly than we ought. But it seems that the system is set up to make that as difficult as possible.

RM: Yeah, and I think, very significantly... the whole thing of thinking highly of ourselves... I think a lot of times, even thinking negatively in a big way about ourselves is thinking too highly. I think we should just stop thinking about ourselves. Which is very difficult to do when you're having photo shoots and you're being put in front of people. Naturally, you want to look your best, and you want to sound your best. So you do a lot of concentrating on what could I say that would be really cool. What can I say, how can I look, what do I do with what I have to work with in terms of trying to make this look as good as possible. And you end up focusing a lot of attention on yourself. Which is natural, but probably pretty detrimental.

SW: But I read too somewhere that at 40, you were going to quit music because you reckoned you'd be too ugly by then.

RM: Well, you know, you get fatter and balder every year.

SW: So what though? Because if what you're saying, if what you're discovering is an inner peace and a freedom from that, why would it matter? Why wouldn't you stay in there as an

example of the fact that we can all get older and fatter and balder and that that's okay?

> RM: You know, there are people who would kill to get to do what I get to do. There are people who are very competitive and who really want to do what I've had the privilege to get to do for the last ten years or so. And I'm kinda going, well, give them a shot. Get out of the way.
>
> There are not a lot of people who want to move into a situation like in any kind of mission situation. There are not people who are competing to, gee I wanna go to the most remote part of the world that I can find and live in a hut, which I think sounds kind of exciting, I guess.

SW: Perhaps I ask this of myself more than of you... Something I wonder is if there's any sort of escapism in that. Because when my husband and I went to the Philippines and we watched what was happening in the garbage dump there. And flying back, Norman said to me, 'I wish we could give up all the trappings of our life in America and go and live there.' But I actually felt it would be more of a challenge to live where we live in a way that brings honor to God than just drop it all and go...

> RM: And I really believe that if you're not living in a way that is honoring to God where you live, that moving isn't going to change that.
>
> I just think that, Buechner says that your calling is where your deepest joy and the world's greatest need cross, or where they intersect.
>
> And I kinda go, I was a youth minister for about three or four years in a church in northern Kentucky, and I really loved doing the youth ministry thing. The only problem was, it was pretty obvious that I was musically gifted. I felt like it would be... that I should probably do something with the music thing. So I did, but I've done that. So I figure I've put my time in.
>
> Some day, you know, I'm gonna be an old man, I mean like a really old man, or I'll be dead.

SW: What a future!

> RM: So I kinda go, boy the people who've had the greatest impact on my life are the people that I want to seek out and to thank. They are the people that I remember. And I wanna be one of those people for someone else. I think there can't be any greater joy in life than knowing that someone else's life is richer because you lived.

SW: Oh, yeah.

RM: And so I kinda go... I didn't become a Christian because of a Christian musician. I didn't even become a Christian because of a great preacher. I became a Christian for two reasons. One is because of what Christ did 2000 years ago. And that is something that I didn't even ask him to do. Something I didn't even know to ask him to do. Had Christ not died in my place, then nothing that I could do or anyone else could do would make any difference in my life. I cannot become a Christian of my own esteem. That is the bottom line, very primarily why I'm a Christian.

The other reason is because I encountered the love of Christ in the people of his church and they were the people who talked to me, and they were people who listened to me. They were people who sometimes knocked me upside the head when I needed it. Sometimes they suffered the consequences of my mistakes with me and didn't grind my nose in it.

I was very fortunate to grow up in a Christian family with a large extended family around me, all of very God-fearing and very nice people. As a Christian musician, I travel all the time, and so I don't have the opportunity as a musician to do that thing. And I kinda go, yeah, that's something I wanna do.

I really enjoy what I'm doing now. I think I'm in the best position that a person can be in, because I love what I'm doing, and I'm looking forward to doing something else. So I kinda go, wow, who could have it better?

SW: I can really understand that when I was just doing music and travelling all the time, I don't think there's ever been a lonelier time in my life. Even though at night you'd stand in front of a crowd of people and you seemed not to be alone, it was really lonely, because nobody really knew me. I mean, they all maybe bought my records and knew my music, but none of them knew the things that made me laugh or the things that made me cry. And it can be lonely to be known and yet... I think it was Einstein that said, 'How can I be so known and so alone?'

Let's talk about accountability because I know that that's something that is important in your life. And sometimes one of the trademarks of the Christian musician has been the whole Lone Ranger thing of "I don't want to be known, thank you very much, because if you knew me, you would have a fit."

RM: Which I can understand, because I do know a lot of Christian musicians, and they do put you in fits.

SW: Did you stumble upon your need for accountability?

RM: No, I think it's very natural. I think that it is impossible to be a Christian outside of the context of the church. I think that when we are incorporated into the body of Christ that that's where we're supposed to be. We were never intended to be a lone self floating away any more than an arm is supposed to be a lone limb disconnected. That we're only Christian inasmuch as we're connected.

What I found was... and I'm probably a pretty nice fella, most people would think. What I found is it's very difficult when no one is there who you're immediately accountable to... when you're in cities all the time where you're staying in hotels where nobody knows you, and it doesn't really matter if you don't watch your walk, then you can become fairly... you can license yourself pretty far. And what I realized was boy, I don't do well on my own.

The other thing is, as a Christian musician, because you're playing to an audience that is made up of a lot of people who have a very diverse kind of conviction... There are people who really believe that you must be a Republican in order to be a Christian. There are people who really believe that you must take an abstinence position. There are people who are very anti-war, and they think you must be anti-war. And there are all these people who take all these different things about what you as a Christian are supposed to be. So you end up spending a lot of time trying to defend why you are not this or why you are not that. And what I have realized is boy, I am not accountable to everyone that I meet on the street. I need to be accountable somewhere, and this is driving me crazy.

It is very nice now, I'm a member of Central Christian Church in Wichita, Kansas. It's a very middle-of-the-road, conservative, kindof independent, Christian church, and I'm answerable to the eldership there. And so when someone disagrees with something I say in concert, they can write my elders and complain. And my elders can then knock me upside the head if that's what I need. Or they can write the person back a letter and say this is exactly the doctrine of our church. And what he is saying is in line with what we believe. And we would stand behind what he says or what he does.

SW: So get off his back you narrow-minded whatever.

RM: Yeah, exactly.

SW: Yeah, I kinda got the picture. I like that.

["How Can I Keep Myself from Singing?"]

SW: Welcome back, my guest today, Rich Mullins. I wanted to ask you about your concerts. I know you're not into the spiritual buzz. You're not into the kindof being tanked up from one Friday to the next concert. What do you see as the point of your concerts? What do you hope to convey through your music?

> RM: You know what, I think, mostly music. And I really think that because I'm a Christian... A lot of people think that as a Christian musician, when I write a song, I sit down and say, what really spiritual thing can I say here? And I really don't believe in doing that. I really think you sit down and write really good songs. If you are a Christian, then your faith is going to affect everything you write. So it's not a matter of sitting down with a little agenda and coming up with a song that is very spiritual. I think if you are anything like a spiritual person then your writing will be spiritual writing. You know what I mean is?
>
> If you're a Christian, that will affect whether you're a carpenter or a plumber or a housewife or a secretary or whatever. If your faith doesn't have some impact on your work, it's probably because you have no faith.

SW: You mentioned Buechner earlier and one of his books, The Gospel As Comedy, Tragedy, and Fairy Tale...

> RM: Telling the Truth.

SW: Yes, Telling the Truth, because if you do that in concert, that's not maybe always going to be comfortable, because the truth is not always a comfortable thing.

> RM: Right, in fact, I think it normally isn't.

SW: And are you happy to do that in concert? Is that something you feel at peace with?

> RM: Well, not so much that I'm at peace with that as I'm definitely not at peace with trying to sell comfort. Because I think no one can serve two masters. People are either going to seek comfort in life... They're either going to seek pleasure and the easy way to get through life without any bumps or they're going to seek out the truth. If you seek out the truth, you're not going to have a comfortable and pleasant life. So you can take one or the other, but you can't have them both.

SW: I get a lot of mail from viewers who feel like failures. Who seem to spend all their life feeling like they're a disappointment to God. You've talked a lot about the fact that you feel you've blown it a lot in your short but meaningful life. Have you found a peace in knowing

that God loves you as you are?

RM: There are many things in the Christian faith that are hard to get a handle on, and one of the things that I struggle the hardest with is believing that God really loves me. It's too good to believe, but it's true. Whether I can believe it or not.

The fact is, I think if you took the whole Bible and you shook it around and melted it down and said, 'what is the essence of what this whole thing is saying,' I think it would just be that God loves you very much. That God in fact is crazy about you. I kinda read that, and I go why, why, why? And like Job, God doesn't give me an answer.

SW: A friend of mine, Brennan Manning, said that when he gets home, he believes that perhaps all Christ will look him in the face and say, "Did you believe that I loved you? Did you really believe it?" Because if you believe that, it changes everything.

RM: Yeah, and to the degree that you can believe it, it changes things. I know that more so now at 36 than I did when I was like, 15. At 15, I think I was still trying to win God's approval. And at 26, I had given up. I had gone, oh, wow, how can he ever like a schmuck like me? And at 36, I realized you know what, it's not me.

Your friends that have kids and on their refrigerators they have those really horrible scribblings that their kids do. And they're really proud of them. And you look at them and you go, how can you possibly put that up in front of other people for them to see.

SW: I can tell you don't have children.

RM: Right, well you can't! And you can tell that God does. Because I think that a lot of us think that someday we're going to become the VanGogh of Christianity. That we're going to paint something truly, truly beautiful, and God is going to be so impressed that he's going to hold us up and say, Here's an exemplary Christian. But you know what, I think God just likes people to scribble however awful it comes out. And then he goes, this is my kids'.

SW: That's pretty awesome.

RM: It's kindof frightening.

SW: But it's wonderful. It's very liberating.

RM: Yeah, in many ways.

SW: Because most of us know we're never going to be the VanGogh of anything.

RM: Very true. Which is kindof a relief, too. Because they you go, oh, yeah, once again, we're back to, you know what, it's okay to be a failure.

SW: Plus you get to keep both your ears.

RM: That's true.

SW: That's fairly important in music.

RM: Right!

SW: Coming from a culture like Britain, I'm used to... when I was at college, my friends were Catholics, were Presbyterian, were Baptists, were Assembly of God, were everything. We had very different opinions, very diverse. I loved it. I loved the hodgepodge of life where you don't agree with. But somehow, we seem very uncomfortable with that. That you know I can't really accept you until you follow my ten principles. Do you think that's changing?

RM: I hope it is. I think that we don't like people to disagree with us, because we're really afraid that maybe we're not right. And maybe we're still hung up about being right and wrong. Which was the original sin. Rather than wanting to know God, God said basically, you can know Me or you can know everything else. And man said, well, we want to know everything else. We want to know right from wrong so we can decide for ourselves.

And I think that people in many ways still come to Christianity and see it as being a moralist religion where we have this little set of rights and wrongs. And if you do all these things, then you're a Christian. And if you do these things, then you're a good Christian. And if you do these things, then you're a great Christian. And if you become a missionary, then you're a saint.

I think that Christ, when he said, love one another, was basically saying, 'you know what, you can either concern yourself with the details of what this means or you can center yourself on the intent.'

And I love what Chesterton said, he said, 'When we bind our hearts, we free our hands.' And I think that's very true. That the more we can live in a right relationship with Christ and with God, the less we have to worry about, gee, is this right? Gee, is this wrong?

You hang out with people long enough and you pick up their qualities. And so I think that in Christianity much more than my going through the Bible and saying, now where are all the scriptures that support my position on when the millennium is going to happen.

If I go to the Bible and say what is the heart of this? What is God trying to say to us here? If I believe that this is God's revelation of himself. And as a Christian I think I have to. Otherwise I have no basis for becoming a Christian. Then what I have to say is what is God like? What from the scriptures can I understand that God is like?

If these are the reliable and authoritative witnesses to the word of God, who is Christ, then when I come to recognize Jesus, what will he look like? And how can I come to look like him?

We live in a very information-oriented kind of society. And we have a very information-oriented way of thinking. Education... when you read in Proverbs, when it talks about wisdom, it's not talking about someone who is very well educated. Wisdom is a character thing. And being a fool is a character thing. It doesn't mean that you are uneducated. It doesn't even mean that you're stupid. It means that you have weak character. And I think character is more important than having a real rigid, little list of dos and don'ts.

SW: Well, it sounds like we only have four more years of Rich's music, so you'd better buy it fast before it all goes out of the stores. Rich, thanks so much for coming and being with us. It was good to talk to you.

RM: Oh, thanks for having me.

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WCBW Interview

Sandi: Well, I think our listeners are well aquatinted with you. Not only you've come to town a lot of times, but we've done a lot of interviews. So it's probably just like a breath of fresh air for them to hear from you again. We're getting ready for the Dove Awards, and a lot of big music. I must say, I missed your listening party of your brand new album.

> *Rich: Oh, Wow! It was a really, it was fun. That was a **fine** moment for me.*

Sandi: Tell me about...I heard some good things. Beaker was tellin' me about it, and he's just pumped about it. You know, when I first heard your The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 1 , I couldn't imagine there even being a Volume 2, or it getting any better. So how is it different, and how is it the same?

> *Rich: Well, I think it's the same in that it's... well, it's kind of like Volume 1. By itself, there are several different musical styles that we kind of go into. And so, Volume 1 is different and the same, and Volume 2 is the same in that it's different and it's the same. (You can tell Rich is smiling. Sandy laughs. Then Rich begins laughing.)*
>
> *Am I making sense? This is like this, (Sandi is laughing hysterically, Rich is just snickering,) I keep answering this question, and I keep going, "No, that's not really true."*

Sandi: That confusing moment brought to you by Rich Mullins. Thank you very much.

> *Rich: Yeah, really... (Sandi laughing.)*

Sandi (to Rich): Probably, I guess what you're saying is that it's unique, it's different musical styles that are represented, but lyrically maybe it's the same?

Sandi (to radio audience): I'm trying to figure him out. That's a scary thing. That's...

> *Rich: Yeah. (Sandi laughs.) I would just say, if you liked Volume 1, you will probably like Volume 2. And if you didn't like Volume 1, you may like Volume 2, so go ahead and buy it anyway. (Rich laughs.)*

Sandi: So, you can't lose with Volume 2. That's the moral...

> *Rich: (Saying cheerleader style) "You can't lose, with Volume Twos."*

Sandi: Ah, Beaker was saying, maybe, I don't, I don't want to get too personal here, but Beaker was saying you've gotten off a long tour. It was a long haul, and really kind of draining on you, things like that. Is that the toughest part about doing what you do? Being on the road for so long, and day in and day out, singing the same songs over and over? I don't know... you tell me.

> *Rich: Kind of, yeah. And it's weird things about, like because, I really enjoy the performing. But it's weird things like, when you get to the place where you're gonna play, and they're supposed to provide electricity and they didn't. And so you can't plug your amps in.*
>
> *And it's things like, you have an hour and a half, and you go, "Oh great, I've gotta do my laundry," because I'm down to where I've already been buying additional packages of underwear and stuff. (Sandi laughs.) So, you go, "Man, I can do my laundry." And you jump in the truck, and you take off to find a laundromat; and fifty minutes later you come across one and you no longer have time to do it. But then you can't find your way back to the hall where you're playing. So you have to find a pay phone, and you don't have a quarter. It's just those kinds of things.*
>
> *But I kinda go, you know what? I think everybodys' lives have a lot of aggravations in 'em. And I'm sure that when I'm not touring anymore I will find something else to complain about. That it's a matter of learning to look for what to be thankful for. I'm sure a housewife has a very draining kind of life. I'm sure that secretaries, I'm sure that factory workers, I'm sure that mechanics... We all have those things in our lives.*
>
> *And so, I think, sometimes people think that people who get to travel and perform and stuff never get tired, and never feel drained, and never get*

> *grumpy. And yes, we do, just like everybody else. That should be clear. But it should also be clear that those of us who like to complain about it as if we had a unique situation, that's wrong also. You know?*

Sandi: If that's the most frustrating part of what you do, what's the most gratifying?

> *Rich: Things like when I meet someone and they say, "You know what? I brought my husband to your concert, and he has accepted the Lord since then and... really turned him around." Things like, when this lady came running up to me and asked me if we made rain at my concert, and I thought she was gonna be mad, she was gonna associate it with the New Age thing or something... And I said, "Well yes, we did." And she said, "My daughter left the concert when you made rain." And I said, I was ready to go... (a pause, silence)...*

Sandi: Right. Just trying to explain it. Yeah. Right...

> *Rich: "...well, what's wrong?" And she said, "No, nothing's wrong. My daughter is hearing impaired, and she had never heard rain before. But because of the proximity of the sound, when you were making it, she could hear it, and it sounded exactly like she had imagined."*
>
> *Things like that. And you go, "Wow! That's great." Things like going back to the hotel after you've done a concert, and realizing that a lot of people are going to bed the same time you are, and they're tired, and they're exhausted from doing work that they **hate** to do. And, what a **terrific** blessing to be able to go to bed tired from doing something that you **love** to do. That's gratifying for me.*

Sandi: Just to alert the station to get "Boy Like Me, Man Like You" cued up... we're gonna go into that in just a moment. But anyone who knows your music well, knows that you're not an easy artist to put in a box. You're not an easy artist to figure out. Perhaps that's why you're an artist. Do you thrive on maybe doing things different, going into the studio trying not to just produce another album or another hit song? Is that really motivating to you, does it challenge you even more to know that your music doesn't sound like everybody

else's?

> *Rich: Yeah, it, it does. (They both laugh.)*

Sandi: You enjoy that a little bit?

> *Rich: Yeah, I'll admit it. (Rich still laughing.) I mean I've heard a lot of people do a lot of weird things for the sake of being weird. And I don't ever want to get into that. But, for me it, it's challenging to say... I think the biggest challenge as a writer and as a performer is not to come up with something different for the sake of being different. But the challenge is to not be afraid to try things that other people maybe haven't tried because they were afraid.*
>
> *And so, I think courage is the hardest thing to cultivate, you know? The courage to go ahead annd do something even though it sounds like it's gonna be stupid. Like the cup thing we do in concert. I mean that's still, people still, everywhere I go, that's, "Oh, you did the cups! That was so great!" You know? And I go, "Oh, I'm so tired of that." And, "Why doesn't someone else do it?" Because, you know, it's just a lot of people would never do that. Why? I don't know. Maybe because they think it's stupid. I think it's stupid. But I also think people enjoy it. I think all the best things in* ***life*** *are stupid.*

Sandi: (chuckles) We want to talk about a song, "Boy Like Me, Man Like You", but first, maybe just get real philosophical... very briefly, what do you think your biggest or most major accomplishment is or has been?

> *Rich: (very seriously and humbly) I think that if I... if I can be obedient to God, that would be the greatest accomplishment.*

Sandi: Tell us about the song, "Boy Like Me, Man Like You", before we hear it.

> *Rich: It just came out of a, Beaker and I talking about trying to... I can't*

> *remember exactly how the whole conversation went. It was a conversation that lasted about three days. (Sandi laughs.) You know, we were talking about the apostles, and what it would be like to be one of the apostles and try to understand that Jesus Christ was **the** Son of God, that He was the Only Begotten. You know what I mean is?*
>
> *And you're basically trying, you're wrestling there with the doctrine of the Incarnation. And then we were talkin' about Mary; and how weird it would be for her. And then we were talkin' about, "Okay, I wonder if Jesus had any friends when he was a kid?", and "What would it be like to be his friend?", and "What would it be like to have him in class with you?" "What would it...?" And out of all of that, we ended up coming around to "Boy Like Me, Man Like You." And one of the things that I think really hit us was that, it seems wonderful that God, who is from eternity to eternity, should come and dwell in time. And that He Who is Spirit should become flesh. That, even wilder than that, is that once we were nothing, and we were made. And the fact that we are given the opportunity to live, however briefly we get to live... it's kinda wonderful. And life is something that I hope we can be grateful for.*

Sandi (to radio audience): Here's Rich Mullins,

Sandi (to Rich): Thanks for joining us.

> *Rich: Thanks for havin' me.*

Sandi: 'Boy Like Me, Man Like You,' on 104.9 FM WCBW.

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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Hope to Carry On

kidbrothers.net/interviews/ccmmay90.html

Thom Granger

> *The scene is Youngstown, Ohio, at a Holiday Inn Convention facility that is being completely overtaken by teenagers for the weekend - a frightening thought to be sure. It's the Ohio Baptist Youth Fellowship Convention (BYF), and this year they have chosen their theme from a song that not only hit the top of the CCM charts and received a Dove nomination for Song of the Year last year, but may well end up in your church hymnal soon. The theme (and the song) is "Our God is an Awesome God," and its author, Rich Mullins, is scheduled not only to provide a concert for the second night of this convention, but to be its primary teacher for the coarse of the weekend.*
>
> *And at the opening Friday night session, to the strains of the aforementioned song, the man who opened for Amy Grant's Unguarded tour and wrote her mega-hit "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" takes the stage - dressed in a bowling shirt, and a pair of seriously ripped jeans which will adorn him for the duration of the conference. "I like to travel light," he says to me later, with a sly grin that tips its hat to his Irish origins and lets me know this could be a tricky interview.*
>
> *It was, of course. Not because of any purposeful evasiveness on his part, but due to his seemingly indirect way of answering my questions. The answers were always better than the questions anyway - and different, in a way not dissimilar from the young Hebrew who dominates the New Testament, who answered His difficult queries with stories and ideas that had 'em thinking for days.*
>
> *It was only fitting though, from a guy who made a conscious decision a couple of years ago to step off the big stages and move away from Nashville, to travel to Third World countries, and go back to school at a Quaker college in his new home base of Wichita, Kansas, all the while turning out some of the most creative and thought-provoking songs in contemporary Christian music - and ministering with a guy named Beaker under the banner of a religious order in the tradition of St. Francis of Assisi*

- at youth retreats like this one.

And at the BYF Convention, it's positively unglamorous for Mullins, and just the way he wants it. Talk about de-mythologizing. "I don't want to be put up on a pedestal, 'cause I don't want to have to take the fall. I want people to listen to what I have to say because I'm real, not because I'm flashy. When Christ met the rich young ruler, the first thing he did was look at him, then he loved him, then he spoke to him. A lot of Christian musicians don't look at who they're singing to. That's an O.K. attitude if you're there to entertain, but I don't think ministry happens when the person you're ministering to is invisible.

"You know what? The world is full of musicians. What the world is starving for is Christ. If I wanna just go to a concert, I'll go see the Chieftains, or a symphony, or a jazz concert, or a rock concert. But if I go to a Christian concert, I want to be reminded that He is a loving God, and that He has forgiven me, and there is hope."

A Rich Mullins concert is full of hope. It's also full of a lot of other things you won't see at most "professional" rock concerts. Like the presence of "non-professionals" on the stage, instruments you might not have seen before, a lot of rough edges on a gem we're used to seeing buffed and polished. A lot of life.

When Mullins took the stage Saturday night for his official concert-part of the weekend, he looked virtually no different to the attending kids than he had to them that afternoon in his teaching session. Well, he had changed out of his bowling shirt - into a Friends University sweatshirt. And his hair was pulled back into a ponytail, which I suspect was more for convenience. But the ever-present jeans stayed on (barely), and the effect was pretty underwhelming. The concert got started in the same manner, with Beaker, a guy who has only played the guitar for ten months, leading the group in a simple praise chorus he wrote called "Step by Step," instead of kicking in with one of Mullin's many number one hits.

But by the time he pulled a hammer dulcimer on his lap to lead Avenue G (a local Wichita band Mullins has been touring with) through a series of songs that incorporated it - the recent #1 "My One Thing" among them - the room was alive with a spirit and energy equal to that at any U2 concert. Maybe it's something in his Irish blood, but Rich could have been Bono's brother leading this crowd in the dramatic closer, "I See You," which had us

all singing a cappella, not unlike U2's "40." And the rafters shook when we sang "Awesome God" that night, followed by Rich's virtuoso performance of "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" - his first song to be recorded on a major label by the major artist - which presumably changed his life. Or did it?

"I had been singing that song for years. None of my peers were into Christian music, and a good many of us didn't even know who she [Amy Grant] was when she recorded it. I wrote it because I was practicing Bach's C Minor Fugue, and when I got to where I could play it decently, I just didn't want to quit, so I wrote the introduction, which led to the song. I hope Bach would like it. His music is way more important that the Christian music you hear now. I'm not saying today's Christian music has no value, I'm just afraid that we miss the real value of it, and use it for something it's no good at. It's value lies in its ability to point beyond itself to Christ."

Guess I shouldn't have been surprised at his reaction. After all, this was the guy who moved away from Nashville. "Hey, a career is only so important anyway. I remember in my senior year at high school thinking, 'If I am going to be resurrected some day and stand before God, and live forever with Him after only 90 years or so here on Earth, then my relationship with God has got to be my top priority.' That's when I decided to go to Bible college, and that type of thinking has led me to a lot of decisions since, because nothing else makes sense. I keep looking at people who have chosen other priorities, and maybe their life isn't necessarily more miserable than mine, but it's certainly no better. In many ways, I have a far better way of living."

And Mullins' "better way" has led him to be in Youngstown this weekend. He says the reason has something to do with incarnation. "People are naturally interested in people more than ideas. People want relationship, and are naturally interested in incarnation. They want to see someone who embodies ideas. These kids could have spent a lot less money on a book that would have given them more to think about, for a longer period of time, then it cost to come to this retreat. But it would not be incarnate to them. It's not good to be alone anyway, and libraries are lonely places."

But wait a minute. Isn't this guy single - and spending a lot of time in school libraries - the guy who wrote "Doubly Good to You," a song about the joys of spending your life with a help mate? "Yeah, somebody said to me, 'That is one of the most hurtful songs I've ever heard, because it implies that God hasn't been "doubly good" to single people.' And I said, 'You're right. But God doesn't have to be good to anybody. He doesn't owe us the breath

we breathe. I figure if God has given us salvation, that's way more than we deserve, and I won't judge Him for not giving me something else.

"It's very dangerous to be alone though, and I'm very grateful I don't have to be anymore, 'cause I was alone when I was in Nashville. I made the mistake of not locking into a church body right away, 'cause I think we are not Christians alone, we are Christians in a body of Christ. I was attending a church, but I had not incorporated myself into a body of believers in such a way as made me accountable."

Rich had started doing retreats with a couple of guys, all over the country. Enter Beaker - the one-name wonder kid who originally saw Mullins in his first group Zion, when he was a kid at a youth retreat in Cincinnati. "But," says Beaker, "I was a weenie then." Beaker had been profoundly affected by a youth pastor in his ninth grade year, who he says showed him the love of Christ for the first time, in a way that got through.

"At the end of my tenth grade year, I asked God to break my heart, and He really gave me the desire to minister to kids, which at that time were my peers. I went to Cincinnati Bible College (where Mullins had also attended years before), and moved to Indiana to be a youth pastor, at a church located about 20 minutes from where Rich grew up. We formally met at a Christ in Youth conference in Adrian, Michigan, and hit it off really well. He asked me for my phone number, and called me when he came to Indiana. We talked about hiking the Appalachian Trail together. Anyway, I ended up being a roadie for him on the Winds of Heaven tour, and this retreat in Wichita, Kansas just kinda changed everything."

Rich says it's one of those things he can't explain. But when they did the retreat at Central Christian Church, he felt like he belonged there. "They were ordinary kids, but they knew the scriptures, which was cool. We were only there once, but those kids were constantly on my mind. Then we were in Oklahoma, and a couple of the youth sponsors from Wichita came down and joined us there. They just wanted to support us, and I had never had that kind of support before. I also had a tremendous amount of respect for one of the ministers, Morris Howard. Anyway, after a lot of prayer and thought, I decided to move to Wichita, because I wanted to be involved in this church. The ironic thing is that Morris died of a heart attack right after there. And people aren't terribly impressed with what I do, but they love me and support me and give me assignments and I'm accountable."

Doug Ingmire is a staff minister at Central Christian, who works with Rich and Beaker, and remembers when Rich approached the church elders. "He asked that he be put under the authority of the elders in three areas: to be accountable for his ministry and lifestyle, to be sent out officially by the church, and to be discipled by an elder, as a covering for him. This affords Rich more freedom, so he can be single-minded and focused in his ministry. We're not a hideout that he can run to every time he does something stupid, but we want to help him be responsible in public. It also gives him a structure for what he is doing. He also leads worship at the church here for us, and he and Beaker share often on Sundays. We want them to be at home here, and I think they feel that way."

Rich did feel at home there, but there was still something more he wanted, a deeper commitment. "I think I would like to be a monk. I really considered Catholicism a few years ago, but there were some things that I just couldn't reconcile. But I thought, 'Why can't we have a religious order just because we're not Catholic?' It's hard to recruit people to a religious order, though. But Beaker and I pooled our resources and have set a salary for ourselves, and whatever comes beyond that we give back to the kingdom of God. We have a lot in common, a lot of things we don't particularly like about ourselves, but we help each other stay in line and are a good support system for each other."

Beaker always agrees. "I've always hated authority - I hated Bible college. But Rich has really been a great influence for me because he really believes in the Church." Thus was born The Kid Brothers of St. Frank - as in Francis, but more, uh, contemporary. It's the Kid Brothers who are ministering at the BYF Convention in Ohio, and it's all they do throughout the spring and fall. Summer will include more of a traditional artist-oriented tour. But it's all present reality, 'cause Rich Mullins wants to be a missionary, and his recent travels to Guatemala, Thailand, Japan, and Korea have led to his decision to go back to school to get his masters in music education.

"Yeah, I was one of those kids who loved the missionary who'd come to VBS and show slides. I loved the slides. Tony Campolo also had a big impact on me about missions. Anyone who's really interested in missions should go to the colleges, because there are so many foreign students who've never heard about Jesus, and they can take Him back to their country when they return.

"Your concern has to be for people, though, and if you're not doing something for other people right now where you're at, you're not going to become more interested because you go to another country." Beaker quoted Mother Teresa saying, "'There are no great things done. Only small things with a big love.' Don't try and do great things for God. You don't need a recording contract - just do it. Go to old folks homes, boys ranches, go hug the kid who smells bad. Just do it."

Beaker is also back at school, getting his master of arts at the University of Wichita. He wants to teach literature and writing. Rich wants to be "the best music teacher a Third World kid ever had, so he can start learning, and once you start learning, you never want to stop. I'm interested in learning how to deal with the limitations of teaching in those environments. A lot of Third World countries will want you if you have a degree from an American University, so I hope in six years to be in the mission field. I think that's where I'm being led, and I'm going to be ready in case that's the case."

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WCBW Interview

kidbrothers.net/interviews/wcbw1990.html

Sandi: (to radio audience) Again we're broadcasting live from GMA week in Nashville, Tennessee, and we've gone from an empty studio to one that's quite full now. Let me put my headphones on here. We've got with us Rich Mullins and also the members, a few, three of the members of Whiteheart. We'll get to them in just a minute, but...

Sandi: (to Rich Mullins) Rich, hi!

> *Rich: Hi, how are you?*

Sandi: (laughs) We're across the room, just about, from each other, and I'm glad you've joined us today. It was good to see you yesterday at the reception, and again today. And, uh, it just seems kinda like we keep running into each other; but it's always good to see you. I'm glad...

> *Rich (nterrupting): I think that's the whole point of everybody staying in one hotel, just so you can run into each other...*

Sandi: Yeah, well, I know what it's like from the radio perspective, what's it like for the artists to be here for a whole week?

> *Rich: It's... well, I think that you probably go into Christian music because you really want to say something about.. you know, what it might mean to be a Christian. And I think that being able to do a lot of radio stuff, and all that, just gives you more opportunity to do more of what you got into this in the first place for. And so this part of it is actually my favorite part. I mean, there's a lot of stuff that is uncomfortable for everybody, I think, but this is the good part. (Sandi laughs) So I'm glad to be here.*

Sandi: Another part of what's been in your schedule is that of going into the studio. I don't know where that ranks as far as best, least favorite, worst, whatever, but you've spent,

you tell me, how much of the last few months have you been in the studio?

> *Rich: A lot. (They laugh) Way more... see, I don't like the way I sound, you know? I don't like to sing. And, I...*

Sandi: You don't like to sing?

> *Rich: No. (Sandi continues to laugh.) I like to write. I mean writing is really what I like to do. And I'm, I'm such a... I'm a real booger. I don't like other people to sing my songs 'cause I never like the way they do it. (Sandi still laughing.) So I figure I may as well.*

Sandi: You're in quite a quandary there - you don't like to sing, you don't like when other people sing (Sandi's laughing)!

> *Rich: Right. So I may as well botch 'em as someone else. But I mean, it's nice after you've sung, and after they've doctored your voice up and made you sound like you know what you're doing. You know, you hear the finished product and you go, "Wow! What did you do?" (Rich is laughing) You know? But then, you know, when you're recording... I remember the first album that we were doing, and I was real nervous,* ***real*** *nervous about singing then. At some point you just finally say, "You know what, it doesn't really matter if you're a great singer." I mean there are only so many great singers out there, and there are plenty of 'em, and I'm not one of them. But the thing is, I just think that what you have to say is probably more important than how good you sound when you're saying it. We were working on the first album and I hadn't yet developed that. I had this idea that everyone that recorded was supposed to be a great singer. So I was tryin'* ***so*** *hard to sing (Sandy laughs) and everyone's goin', "Stop bein' so conscientious. Stop bein' so nervous about it and loosen up a little bit." And so I had stepped out [of the sound booth] and they turned my voice on, the recording with no reverb, and there was no accompaniment. And I heard this* ***terrible*** *voice (Sandi is laughing) and I stuck my head back in the thing, and I said, "See, that's just exactly it! I step back outside the room and you guys make fun of the way I sound" (Sandi is really laughing) and*

> *they all just sat there looking at each other and went, "We weren't making fun of you or anything, we were just playing you."*

Sandi: Oh, no! (They both laugh.)

> *Rich: So, it's just really... but you know, you get over it. (Sandi is still laughing.) You get over it, and you kinda go, "Gee, I could be selling shoes." So, this isn't so bad.*

Sandi: You talked about, writing music was your favorite part. And yet, last night you made a comment at the showcase that it's hard work. What do you mean it's hard work to write a song?

> *Rich: I just mean that, well, I think when you look at Genesis, when God created man, that there are some really significant little snips there. And one is that God created man in His own image. And I don't know what that means exactly, but I'm sure it's significant - that God breathed the breath of life into him, and he became a living soul, and I think that's something, that. And that God gave man sexuality, that He created male and female, and that our sexuality is a part of who we are. And that He told man to work. And I think that when we work, we're doing what we were made to do. And we are actualizing our identity here. Does that sound heavy, or what? (Sandi laughs.) I mean, does it sound like I've been reading those self-help books? Which... I don't read them (Sandi is really laughing here) because I think it's... I think self-help is the most ridiculous idea ever. So how can you write a book about a stupid idea? (Sandi continues laughing.) It's kind of foolish.*

Sandi: This editorial comment brought to you by Rich Mullins...

> *Rich: Yes, these views are not necessarily those of WCBW (both laughing.) But, you know... so I kinda go, "Everybody works." It's like when you put out a garden. You don't absolutely love the idea of standing out there in the middle of a hot, sweltering day and hoeing, and puttin' your beans up, and*

> *gettin' everything fixed. But, at the end of the day, you sit down on your porch and you have a glass of tea, and you go, "Ah! This feels good." Or you exercise, and you feel your muscles are kinda achy, and you go, "Ah, this is a nice kind of ache."*

Sandi: So, the nice kind of work... you didn't mean that it's laborious all the time, that there's never enjoyment out of it. I think that was the point that you were trying to make.

> *Rich: Right. That it is... and I think a lot of people **do** think that people who write music are these real... I would say that we are very fortunate people. Because I'm glad that my gifts don't lie in foundry work. You know, 'cause... but if it did I would probably feel some kind of fulfillment from working in a foundry.*
>
> *But I think writers are just like everybody else. They're just other people... work with other kinds of tools and other kinds of materials. We work with literary tools, and we work with words, and we work with music... it's all very much the same.*

Sandi: And it's fulfilling work for you, and it has to be... maybe it is or isn't... but even more fulfilling when it's appreciated by someone else.

> *Rich: Yeah, and that's the big conflict. Because, I really believe that my greatest joy in doing what I'm doing - the greatest joy that I experience from just being a musician or being a writer - comes when I can set aside whatever other people might think and I write purely for the joy of doing it. And purely with the motive of really trying to communicate something. And when I start getting uptight about what people might say about **how** I'm communicating, then this other kinda ugly element enters into the whole thing, and it's a lot less purely joyful.*

Sandi: Sure, but, well, I'm sure with the critical also comes the appreciation value, you know? When you... it has to be gratifying to know that someone truly enjoys your work. Coming up with something like the Dove Awards, you've got two songs nominated - "Awesome God" Three? That's right, the rock one, too...

> *Rich: Is that bizarre or what? (Sandi laughs.) I mean, I don't even listen to rock music. (Sandi laughing harder.) I don't understand it. I did when I was a teenager, but I haven't had that angst since I was twenty-five.*

Sandi: Now, you're sittin' next to three Whiteheart guys. You better be careful, Rich.

> *Rich: Well, these guys are strong enough to sustain that youthful thing, you know. (Sandi laughs.) I'm not. I'm a weakie. (Sandi laughing harder.)*

Sandi: You've got three songs nominated - "Bound To Come Some Trouble," "Awesome God," and also...

> *Rich: "Bound To Come Some Trouble," that's bizarre, too, because that's like Inspirational, and I feel like, "Geez, what am I, in the Geriatrics Ward here, or what?"*

Sandi: Well, I was going to ask you. You're nominated in three basically different categories. You're in Rock, Inspirational, and Adult Contemporary. You cross the board and you call it surprising? You don't think that you're really one who can satisfy a lot of different categories or groups of people? I think you do quite well.

> *Rich: Well, see, I feel real good about that. (Sandi laughs.) I mean, when I look at the whole picture I go, it is kinda neat; because I really feel like a good song should be able to be done in any number of different styles. But see, like I put a lot more stock in the song than in the production of it. And I feel like if you... if the writing is done in a good way, then that song can be produced as just about any kind of song you want to produce it as. And the production, hopefully won't get in the way of the song. The song will be strong enough to come out above the production.*

Sandi: Okay. Well, I tell you what. We're gonna wrap it up here. I wanna tell the people at the station to get "Awesome God" ready. We're gonna go into that in just a moment. But before we do, as a final question to touch on something that you were talking about again

last night. You said, in a joking fashion, something about, "Boy, it's been ten years since I've had a date." Or something like that.

> *Rich: Yeah.*

Sandi: Just on a personal note, is being single something that you struggle with? I mean, your schedule. You're on the road a lot.

> *Rich: Sure, but I'm sure that being married would be something that I would struggle with, too. Like I figure, if you're not happy single, you won't be happy married. (Sandi laughs.) So, the thing to do is to not worry about it. You know, there are certain advantages to being married, I'm sure. I've heard. (Sandy laughs.) But there are certain advantages in being single, also. Like, like you don't have to worry about your kids, you know? So you can go to bed at midnight and not be going, "Oh my, where are my kids?" And you can take off and go to Thailand or to Guatemala, or wherever you want to go and you don't have to feel like you're cheating your kids out of your primary responsibility to them. So there are advantages and disadvantages in everything.*

Sandi: As a final question, you bring up the work of missions. I heard you say that originally, or some time ago, that you didn't want to do this forever. You wanted to do it for a season, and then maybe devote more of your time to missions. What is down the road, do you know?

> *Rich: Well, I want to be a missionary. (Rich laughs, then Sandy laughs.) You know, I just think, you know, at some point, I just think that we are called to give account for what we've done with the talents we've been given. And I think that... I mean, I feel real good about what's happened for me in terms of what I've been able to do with music. I feel **really** good about it. I'm very pleased and you know, a lot people have said, "Well, what's wrong? What's wrong?" I'm like, "Man, nothin'." I mean, things are going **far** better than anyone at my record company certainly thought they would. (Sandy laughs.) And even I'm surprised. Even though I was a little cockier about it all than they. (Sandi is still laughing.) But I just kinda go, I*

> *don't know... sometimes I just think that everything has its place. And I think, you know, in another five years I'm gonna start repeating myself even worse than I already do. So what's the point of that, you know? And... time to move on. (Sandy laughs.) And I'm gonna be having my mid-life crisis about that time, so I'm just planning through it.*

Sandi: You're gonna go to Guatemala and have your mid-life crisis.

> *Rich: Well maybe. I'm thinking about other places. (Sandi laughing.) I'm thinking somewhere that speaks English, because I'm very bad at foreign languages. (Sandy is still laughing.) And so, but...*

Sandi: Well, bad at foreign languages, good songwriter, a nice guy. What a trade-off!

> *Rich: **Sometimes** a nice guy... (Rich laughs.)*

Sandi: Somethin' like that.

Sandi: (to radio audience) Rich Mullins, our guest.

Sandi: (to Rich) I appreciate you stopping by, Rich. It's always good to talk to you.

> *Rich: Well, thanks for giving me the opportunity to do this. This is what I **like** to do. (Sandi laughs) I **love** to talk. (Sandi laughs harder) Especially about myself. (Rich and Sandi are hysterical.)*

Sandi: (to Rich) Well I tell you what. We're gonna just take off the mike, and you can just kinda stand over in the corner and talk about yourself here...

Sandi (to radio audience): We're gonna have the members of Whiteheart join us in just a second. Rich Mullins, thanks. We're gonna go into "Awesome God," one of the songs nominated for Song of the Year. Thanks for joining us, Rich, from Nashville, TN, GMA Live on 104.9 FM, WCBW.

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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WCBW Interview

Sandi: (to listeners) Good afternoon! This is Sandi Brown continuing our coverage of GMA, live in Nashville, and our guest for the next couple of minutes is Rich Mullins.

Sandi: (to Rich) Rich, thanks for taking some time out for us!

> *Rich: Hey, I'd rather take time out for you than anyone I can think of right now.*

Sandi: Well, thanks Rich, you're too kind! You were talking about how it's a rough week - we were conversing about who's more tired. We'll try and keep each other awake, okay?

> *Rich: Well, I think part of that is, you know how your dad would always come home tired, and so then you started thinking that being "tired" was the equivalent of being "useful"? (both laugh) So, sometimes I think, I pretend like I'm really, really tired so that I'll feel like I was useful - and I'm just not "useful" as much as I'm just "tired".*

Sandi: (laughs) It's a rough week though! There's no doubt about it.

> *Rich: Yeah.*

Sandi: There's a lot happening for artists. Give us a summary of what it's been like for you, or still what's to come.

> *Rich: Well, I have had interviews starting about ten o'clock every morning, and it goes through to about 7:30 in the evening. And then everyone goes to the Spectacular, which I've been skipping, (Sandi laughs) just 'cause I hear music all the time, you know?*

Sandi: Yeah. Now, you were involved in one of the showcases, the Artists' showcases?

> *Rich: Yeah, New Artist. Which was really... you know, I really believe that if we're gonna keep any kind of vitality in Christian music it will be because people will be willing to listen to new artists... people will be willing to... give people an ear. You know? And I think, "Wow, let's get this going. Let's help people out."*

Sandi: It's not been that long ago that "Rich Mullins" was a new name in Christian music, really. When did the first album come out? What, four?

> *Rich: I think about four years ago. Four. Or five years, maybe?*

Sandi: Right. It seems like things really took off, though, with Winds of Heaven, Stuff of Earth.

> *Rich: Winds of Heaven, yeah. That was kind of a turning point.*

Sandi: Right. And with "Awesome God", the song which is nominated for a Dove Award this year, "Song of the Year", in fact. So we congratulate you on that!

> *Rich: Thank you very much.*

Sandi: We wish you the best - we'll see what happens there. But, a new album project out: Never Picture Perfect.

And you always wonder, after a great album like Winds of Heaven, wow, what are you possibly gonna due next? And then you come out with Never Picture Perfect. And it's great!

> *Rich: Well, thank you.*

Sandi: There are some honest songs on there. You know, you've been termed now, and quite appropriately so, one of the greatest poets of our day, maybe!

> *Rich: (laughing)Yeah, that seems very funny to me.*

Sandi: (laughing now) But you obviously know... I mean, all facades aside, you obviously know you are a talented songwriter.

> *Rich: Yeah...*

Sandi: So what do you think about? When you sit down, do you think, "I'm gonna write a song now"? Or are they births from ideas that then result in songs? Or... how does songwriting come about for you?

> *Rich: Well, for me, I try to write, you know, I try to write maybe a couple songs a week.*

Sandi: Wow!

> *Rich: Most of those get thrown away because they're no good. But I write a page of journal about every night. And you just write. If you're a writer, you write. You know, just like if you're a carpenter, you would drive nails. So, I'm a big believer that... it's kinda like... there's an old story about this man who walked into a... there's a real famous artist, and this guy said, "I need a picture of a rooster." And so the artist said, "Okay, well, I'll work on it. Come back in a month." And he came back in a month, and he wasn't done. And he said, "Well, I'll need it in a couple weeks." So he came back in a couple weeks, and he still wasn't done. He said, "Well, I'll come back in three days." So he came back in three days, and he still wasn't done. And he said, "Well, man, I've gotta have it now!" And so the artist just whipped right away, just whipped up this INCREDIBLE picture of a rooster. And the guy said, "That took you ten minutes to do. Why didn't you do it before?" And he said, "Well, look over in that trash can. It's full of roosters."*

> *"You know I've been drawing and drawing and drawing. And this is what you get." You know? And you just write, and you write, and you write. And some things you write are not gonna be very good. Some things you write are gonna be very good. The ones that, generally, I feel real good about, are songs that **do** feel a little more inspired than just, you know, "Well it's time to sit down and write now."*
>
> *There's songs that come out of a... I guess I write a lot out of my own experience... when you read something and it really knocks you upside the head or you see a movie or you hear a sermon or you talk to an old friend on the phone.*

Sandi: I was going to ask you about that. How much of what we hear on your albums are really 'of you' or really 'of inspired?' You know, I was talking to Michael Card yesterday or the day before; and he was saying that he really enjoys sometimes going back and just listening to his music because then he realizes just how much it's 'not of him.' Do you ever come up with that?

> *Rich: I feel like my mine is pretty much 'of me.' (Sandi laughs) Um, I...*

Sandi (interrupting): What role, then, does God play in that, though? I mean, obviously you're giving Him credit, still?

> *Rich: Right. The same role that He played when He gave carpenters arms. That man, part of our identity is our work. That God created man, which makes man a spiritual being. That God gave man work to do, which makes man a working being, a creative being... and God gave man sexuality. One third of our identity, as we can understand it from the first chapter of Genesis, is that we work. And so, I think God created me with the need to work, He created me with talent to work with. And so I offer the very best that I can come up with, up to God. And I think He gets a big jar out of it. Not 'cause it's great, but because I'm His kid. And He goes, "Wow, look! He's working! He's doing what I created him to do!"*

Sandi: That's a neat. I've never heard that explanation of it before. But that's real neat.

I'll never forget something you said, Rich, one time when you were in St. Louis, about your songwriting, and about the fact that some of it... you talk about how you write all these songs, some of it's good, some of it's not. Some of it's appropriate to share with the Body of Christ, some of it isn't. I'll never forget that. That there are some songs that you mentioned - maybe you want to expand on that again today - that you would just never think of putting on a Christian album or one of your albums.

> *Rich: Right.*

Sandi: Why? Or, reiterate that.

> *Rich: Well, because I figure, on an album, you've got about ten shots at saying something to somebody. And so I think, I look at the songs that I've written, and I say, "If I only had ten things that I could say to my audience, would this be one of those ten things?" And there are a lot of songs I go, "No, this is a neat song" or "This is a song that's really meaningful to me," but if I could only say ten things, this wouldn't be one of 'em.*

Sandi: Right. Well, I'm so glad that one of the songs you included on Never Picture Perfect was "Bound To Come Some Trouble."

> *Rich: Well, I think that's the whole... the whole book of Job is about a man who suffered. And I think it's very interesting that Job endured all that suffering and did not complain - that the only thing that drove Job over the brink was the consolation of his friends.*

Sandi: 'Friends', right.

> *Rich: And then he went to God and wanted to know why the righteous suffer. And Beuchner points out, God never gave him an answer. That God merely gave him Himself. And when Job had encountered the Almighty, the questions lost their power over him. And I think that a lot of us are real interested in some easy answers, and some "Wow, if I can, if we can come*

> *up with some kind of an easy answer to make life comfortable..." We're much more interested in answers than we are in the Truth. And the Truth is always going to be a mystery. It will always be a paradox. It will always be a little beyond our grasp. And if we're uncomfortable with that, that's okay, because a little bit of discomfort will keep us moving. (humble laugh)*

Sandi: Yeah, I'm glad sometimes that He doesn't give me an easy answer; but just that He does, as you've pointed out, give me Himself...

> *Rich: Yeah...*

Sandi: Why don't we hear "Bound To Come" now? Rich Mullins on 104.9 FM WCBW.

[Bound To Come Some Trouble]

Sandi: Rich, they're saying you've got to go. You've got some other responsibilities and things to do.

> *Rich: Yeah, what a drag! Responsibility, ooooh, who can handle it?*

Sandi: But, we just want to say... you know, you and I were talking before we turned the mic back on - St. Louis loves you. And I don't say that lightly. We've really embraced you. You've come there quite a few times in the last couple of years. You're always welcome. We hope to see you sometime this year.

> *Rich: Well, I love comin'. And you know what? I just want to say you guys in St. Louis, you are very fortunate to have WCBW there. And you guys have been great to me. And I hope we can keep workin' together a lot.*

Sandi: Absolutely! Rich, I know you've got to run. We'll let you run out the door. Leslie with Reunion, thanks for bringing him by. Again, we wish you the best. I'll shake your hand while you head out the door.

> *Rich: Yeah.*

Sandi: Thanks, Rich, we appreciate it.

> *Rich: Yeah, too bad this isn't on video. (He laughs, then Sandi laughs. Sounds like a hug instead of a handshake.)*

Sandi: (to Rich) There you go. (They laugh again.)

Sandi: (to listeners) Rich Mullins, one of our guests here for GMA Live. We're gonna take care of some business and then we're gonna hear the song, "Awesome God", which is nominated for Song of the Year. Stay tuned, GMA Live, brought to you by The Christian Bookstore in Fairview Heights, on 104.9 WCBW.

Transcribed by Robin Woodson

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Called! Monologue

Okay, is this on?

Okay, hey this is Rich Mullins here, and you just spent a whole week, or maybe you're in the midst of spending a week, or maybe you're getting ready to spend a week talking about the idea of being called. So we're going just gonna talk about it a little bit more. We're just going to ride this horse to death I think. Because I think it's a very important thing to understand what a calling is and to understand your own individual and personal call.

You can look at the world and you see a lot of trouble.

I was walking by a Benneton store. I was so disappointed because ordinarily I think they have these really wholesome and happy looking ad's. And there was an ad there, where they were selling Valentine clothes, which I'm not at all sure exactly what kind of clothes they handle. But this poster, there were two people, there were two young looking models, they looked like teenage types, and it was a shot from just below the waist up. And the guy didn't have a shirt on, which meant I'm not sure what they were selling from him. And he was standing next to this girl - very nice looking, kinda innocent, pretty red-haired girl - who was wearing I guess a pair of jeans, kindof unbuttoned and either a shirt or a jacket or something. But the significant thing about this thing she had on was that it wasn't buttoned up. Probably, for most of the guys walking by, they didn't notice what she was wearing - they noticed what she wasn't wearing.

They noticed that here were two bodies. And I think it's very significant that the boy and the girl - they're hands are kindof reaching out to one another - one of them is giving the other an apple or they're both holding an apple together. And I think that's a fairly obvious allusion, Christian or non-Christian, to the idea of the Fall. And a lot of people associate sexual awareness with the Fall. And here are these two very innocent looking people, and you get the idea that they're becoming sexually aware.

And this is all done to sell clothes.

And I was a little bit intrigued by the poster, and a little disappointed in the store for having put it up, and a little bit angry that we live in a world where our values are so twisted that we will use human sexuality, that we will use our bodies, that we will use people to sell products

Another good example of the kinda twisted values we have in our world is the fact that about ten thousand people die of starvation every day, in this world, on this planet. And of the tuna that is taken from the oceans in this world and on this planet, I think 80% of the tuna is fed to American cats and dogs so they will have a highly nutritious kindof feeding. I think it's a very twisted value that dogs and cats we are told have to have a high protein meal and so that somehow justifies feeding 80% of the tuna to them while ten thousand people die of starvation every day.

Another good example of the kindof twisted value is that in most states it is legal for a woman to kill a baby if she can use the excuse that the baby is endangering her life. But in no states anywhere is it legal for a baby to kill its mother if the mother is a detriment to its life, and I know a lot of people whose mothers has been a great detriment in their lives. And I think it's a little bit unfair. I think it's a little bit twisted that we have this value system.

Also an interesting thing along the same lines, is that there a good number of states where it is illegal for a girl under eighteen to get her ears pierced without parental excuse, without parental consent. And in a good number of those same states, it is perfectly legal for a girl under eighteen to have an abortion without parental consent.

There's a good word for all this - it's the word decadent. There's really nothing good about the word, except that it's very apt, it's very accurate. What decadent is all about - it comes from the same root as decayed.

And everybody knows what a decayed building or a decayed thing looks like. A decayed building is not the sort of building you'd want to walk in because the floor may give way underneath you, the ceiling may fall on your head, the walls aren't going to keep out the wind, the roof isn't going to keep the rain out. It's a worthless building that may at one time may have been substantial but it is no longer substantial.

And I think, in the history of mankind there has been one really terrifically significant question. And it's a question that actually is a very theological question. And I think the first person to ask that question was God. God

said to Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" Which is kindof another way maybe of saying "Who are you? What are you all about? What are you doing?" And I think people have had to ask themselves that ever since.

And we have a scientific community that tells us that we are plasma, that we are cells, that we're just a bunch of cells running around with electromagnetic impulses that we call thoughts or emotions and that they really don't amount to anything. We have a philosophical community that tell us the same kinda thing - that we're kindof these meaningless purposeless blobs that are left hanging suspended in a great void.

So I think today in contemporary society, there is a good bit of rage. Because nobody likes being told that they're insignificant. Nobody likes being told they don't amount to anything. And I think that it is appropriate that people should be angry when they're told they don't amount to anything.

You see, mankind has for thousands of years looked inwardly to find out who he is or where he is or what he's all about or where he's going. And he has never been able to find the answer within himself. And the entire Bible is a history of God trying to tell us who we are - trying to tell us who we are in Him and who we are without Him.

Contemporary people, modern people in contemporary society, do not like being told anything by anybody, but I think that it's time that we began to listen to the voice of God. Because apart from it we have nothing but decadence, we have nothing but decay. And the building, the structures that we have come up with that we hoped would give some sort of shelter to ourselves - they have begun to disappear, they have begun to decay, they are falling apart and the world is left in a lurch.

This is why I'm so glad that we have a Bible. I'm so glad that we have an authoritative answer to our questions. Not because I'm unwilling to search for myself, but there's a point where searching becomes pretty meaningless if there's no hope of finding . And I think what the scriptures do is they give us the hope of finding things.

I want to call your attention to Second Peter...

Now this is the second time I've gone through this, because we just made this tape a minute ago, only I got a little longwinded, which is a tendency

that I have. I have to confess. And I was still talking when the tape ran out, so I'm going to have to repeat myself, and I hope I can do it a little more concisely

In second peter the first chapter the third verse

Peter says, his divine power (or God's divine power) has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who has called through his own glory and goodness. Divine power gives us what we need for life.

When we try to live our lives under our own steam. When we try to live our lives under our own direction, we end up nowhere. Time and time again, this happens - we've already discussed that a little bit. But, His divine power has given us everything we need for life. His divine power empowers us to live. It gives us the capacity for meaningfulness. It gives us an ability to find some kind of significance. To find out who we are in Him. That comes from His power.

Also, through his power, we have everything we need for Godliness. Godliness is sometimes not a real popular idea because generally when we think of godliness, we get a picture of one of the holiness women with the beehive hair-dos. Or the German Baptist guys who grow beards and shave their mustaches. And everyone looks funny who has presented themselves as being Godly. Or we think of TV evangelists and we know there's nothing godly about most of them. So we're a little bit afraid of this word, a little bit embarrassed by it because it's been so badly misused.

When you think of what it means to be Godly, we don't need to think in terms of those images. What we need to understand is what godliness according to what God says. When we think of Godliness, we need to think about the character of God. And when we think of the character of God, the great attribute of God that marks God is love. And that is also the thing that marks godly people is love. And who of us don't want to be alive and who of us don't want to be loving - able to give and receive love.

That all comes by His divine power through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Our knowledge of Him who called us is a very important thing, and we need to apply ourselves to knowing Him. Through these - through His glory and goodness - He has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you

might participate in the divine or in godliness, and escape the corruption of this world caused by evil desires. The corruption of this world, the decadence, the instability of this world, all those things we talked about a little bit earlier. We can escape that -- we don't have to be controlled by what the scientific or the philosophical communities tell us, or political communities. We can come to understand who we are by what God tells us.

"For this very reason (in verse five he says), make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control, perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the interesting thing. We live in the 80's and this is the information age. And we think that information is everything. Information has a higher price on it at this time in our history than life. People will pay huge amounts of money to have information.

And so we tend to think that a lot of times that if we get the right information about God, the right information about the Christian life, the right information about Jesus, that that's what it really takes. And so a lot of the time that we spend reading the bible is time spent collecting information about God, collecting information about of the Bible, collecting information about this and that.

I always kinda get a kick out of going to Christian bookstores to seeing what the latest information rage is in Christian bookstores. What are they going to tell me about now? What facts are they going to be able to share with me that are going to change my life?

At one time it was time management - it was all the rage. You had to know about time management - it was the all-important thing. If you wanted to be a Christian, you had to manage your time.

Then it was all the sex manuals that came out where Christians got an opportunity to talk about sex because that taboo was finally lifted and there was just this rush - you had to understand sex. Which I never understood why I needed to since I didn't get to do anything about it - it was kindof

frustrating for me. But, that was the second rage.

Relationships have been a big rage. Just one thing after another. Discipling become the all-time great thing. The gifts of the holy spirit got a whole lot of attention at one time.

And people just read and read and read and read and read all these books. And I think it's funny because every one of these books tended to think they were real central to Christian life and to spiritual vitality. And yet every one of them has passed by the way and then been replaced by another one, because people keep thinking if they accumulate enough information, they're going to become spiritually healthy, and the information always fails.

Because it is not information that gives us spiritual vitality, it is practice. It is faith, it is the experience of God, not the accumulation of information about God. And subjective religion is a little bit scary, but it should be. Because when we al low ourselves to come into the presence of a God who welcomes us into his presence and yet, at the same time, forbids us to do that. When we come into the presence of God, it's a frightening thing and it should be.

But the experience of god is a very important thing and when Peter talks here about faith adding to faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, those are experiential things. They have nothing or very little to do with information. They grow out of information, but they go way beyond the information. Just like a tree grows out of a seed, but it goes way beyond the seed. It's much bigger than the seed.

"If we possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let me ask you this: When was the last time a friend of yours who was a non-Christian asked you what was it that made you different from them?

When was the last time you had a teacher in your school say, "You know, I am so impressed with your character, what is it that you've got that keeps you going?"

You see, I think, if the Holy Spirit lives in us, if we are Christians, and if we are the light of the world, then people should be affected by our presence,

and people should be curious about what's making the big difference. If people aren't asking us questions, maybe it's because we're unproductive and ineffective.

But goodness, knowledge, faith, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, these things keep that from happening. These things make visible everything that is important about our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter goes on and he says, "If anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed. Not only do we become ineffective in the world, but we become detrimental to ourselves if we do not practice godliness - if we do not live out the things that we've been taught.

Therefore, and this is the crux of the matter here and I think I've got time to talk about it... Therefore, my brothers be all the more eager to make your calling and your election sure.

God does call us - every one of us God calls us to the church, god calls us to himself, God calls us all to holiness, and we need to understand what all those things mean, because we need to be able to walk in them and walk in them effectively.

When we add things in increasing measure - those things that we've already gone over a couple times that Peter listed there. Once again, faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. If we have those in increasing measure, we're going to be able to discern the voice of God, we're going be able to understand his call, we're going to be able to hear. And that is the all-important thing.

You see, God doesn't only, I believe, God not only calls us all in a universal kinda sense when we're all called to love one another, we're all called to be holy, we're all called to allow Him to incorporate us into His body. But, each of us has a specific role in His body and in His plan for the world and we need to be able to hear the voice of God when he calls us to that

Now, not everyone's going to have thunder and lightning, not everyone's going to see writing on the wall. I think Joseph is a great example. Joseph, as far as we know, never heard God say to him: "Dear Joseph, you're going to go to Egypt and there's gonna be a big famine and you're going to

win a lot of favor with the Pharaoh and you're going to be a big deal and everyone is going to come to you and you're going to save my chosen people." Joseph ended up in Egypt against his own will. God has a plan for each of our lives - what we need to do is to apply ourselves, to be eager, to make our calling sure. Which means, to me, to be eager, to do the things that make it possible for God to move in our lives.

We need not necessarily say God what school do you want me to go to, even though that's not a bad idea and I highly recommend that before you choose a college that you pray - that you sincerely pray, and that you fast. And that you consider everything you know about the scriptures and see what really is right. That you listen to the counsel of your elders, of your parents, of people who are spiritually mature, of your disciplers. But it could be that you're not going to get any clear cut answers. You do know, however, that wherever you go to school, whatever job you take, whatever city you live in - you have to be holy, you have to be godly, you have to be the light of Christ in that area and God will take care of the rest.

I really want to encourage you to be eager to make your calling and election sure. That Christianity not only, that Christianity become something more than a set of doctrines. That it becomes engrained into your personality. That it becomes engrained into your character. That you become a little christ. That you become who He wants you to be, so that He can move you so that he can use you in the way that He wants to use you.

And peter ends up this part by saying, "For if you do these things, and you will never fall and you will receive a rich welcome under the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior of Jesus Christ."

You are really somebody, and hearing the call of God is, in my way of thinking, the equivalent of understanding of who we are in him - what His goals are for our lives and who He sees us as being. And when we allow Him to tell us who we are we may have to change some of our own ideas about ourselves - we may have to change some of our practices and habits to become what he sees us as being but when we do that we can be sure that we won't fall and that we will receive a rich welcome into his eternal kingdom.

That's gonna be worth whatever changes we have to make and I just really want to encourage you to do that -- to be willing to let God call you and to

be willing to follow the call that He gives you.

Thanks for listening and I will see you later...

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Fire By Nite Interview

1988

Blaine Bartel

Blaine Bartel: Hey, welcome to Fire By Nite. My name's Blaine Bartel, and we want to welcome you Uh-Mo-Tik-Lung Village right here in Guatemala. And as you can see, this is our mission program. Someone says, "Oh man, missions, you're gonna make me feel real guilty, aren't ya?" Listen, put your guilt away and just let the Holy Spirit convict you, okay? It's gonna be a lot of fun. We have numerous guests as you can see, a lot of guests here on the program, but our **special** guest is Rich Mullins, and he's a contemporary Christian music artist who is uh, really doing some things for the Lord. And our other guest is Ron Luce, who is the director of the Teen Mania mission program. And we are here with hundreds of radical young people, with Teen Mania, that are absolutely changing this country for Jesus Christ. Thousands of people come to the Lord, so let's not go any longer. Let's get right into it. Buenos Dias.

[A skit]

[Some of "Awesome God" plays as an intro to interview.]

Blaine Bartel: We're here at the Ritz Hotel in Guatemala City, and this is our special guest right here. This is Rich Mullins. And, Rich, it's very good to have you on the program.

> Rich Mullins: Well, thank you. It's very good to be here.

BB: Rich, a lot of people don't realize, but you're also a very talented songwriter. You've written a number of songs for Amy Grant - "Sing Your Praises to the Lord" was a big hit, "Love of Another Kind," on her latest album, "Doubly Good To You"... Being a lyricist, do you really feel like today's Christian music is communicating, in word, the real message of Jesus Christ?

> RM: I think lyrically, a lot of people are saying everything that they're expected to say. It's like they say all the right "Sunday School" little things. And, and it's even, like, "right", and very "Sunday School-ish" now to say, "Gee, I'm questioning my faith. It seems like, even our music, **should** be distinct. And it just seems like a lot of people want to sound as much like the world as they can and still have a

> Christian message, which maybe that's evangelistic, but I guess because I personally have a real problem with really slick music and really slick lifestyles and people who are dressed in all the right clothes and all that - you know, being very "in" - because I think Jesus reaches to the people who are very "out."

[A clip of Rich, playing "Such a Thing as Glory," on hammered dulcimer. Guatemalan kids are captivated. Then back to interview]

BB: Okay, you've got a song, we're gonna take a look at, in video form, here. It's called, "The Other Side of The World," and I'd like you to set that up for our audience, if you would.

> RM: That was a song that I wrote. It was kind of, everything came together in the time that I got to spend in The Orient. Everything kinda came together one morning. We were gettin' ready to be in a worship service where there were gonna be Shan- and Lisu- and Lahu- and Chinese- and Northern Thai- and English-speaking people, and I just really began, all of a sudden to get a grasp of what the church was doing. And I was, I was kind of overwhelmed, and... Then, tonight seeing again, being with Christians, and seeing that there **is** power in the body of Christ when we come together, and He **does** equip us. Then you go, "Yeah, there is **hope**." And I'm very thankful to be a part of a movement of people that's being directed by God.

["The Other Side of the World" video plays in it's entirety.]

[Visit with Ron Luce]

[Some kids tell of their Fire By Nite missionary trip experiences. Free Fire By Nite brochure is promoted. The address given is not Willie George Ministries, but Fire By Nite. It is: Fire by Nite Missions Trip, P.O. Box 639, Broken Arrow, OK, 74013.]

[Mission trip video footage. Music other than Rich's plays in background.]

[Another corny skit.]

[Ron Luce speaks about "What's Hot" in Guatemala. He introduces the Fire By Nite Top Ten Countdown. - "Awesome God" plays in background, and is listed as #1; but the album cover shown is Pictures In The Sky, not Winds of Heaven, Stuff of Earth.]

[A very short portion of trip video footage is shown, and "Home" plays in the background as Blaine and Rich sit on a wall near the garbage dump.]

BB: We're here at the Guatemala city dump, and as you can see behind me, this is "home" for a lot of the people here. And we're with Rich Mullins. And Rich, you have the unique opportunity of influencing a lot of young people through your music. I want to ask you a question - do you feel like the contemporary Christian musician, as a whole, is doing their part to present a missionary vision and an impact to today's young people?

> RM: Man, I think there are a lot of people out there who are really doing their best and who are really showing the people in United States that there are needs. I think there are a lot of people representing World Vision, for example and they have a **great** program I think, for just educating people in the United States as to the needs. I think, **primarily**, the responsibility for missions still is with the **church**. But, I **do** see a lot of people who are doing a lot of good things.

BB: You know, when you look around and see the tremendous needs beyond our own borders - you know, I've **never** seen anything like this in the United States - and when you see it, you just say, "Man, there's a need." But what, what should our response be - as Christians - in the United States? I mean, what do we say to this now that we have knowledge? You know, we're accountable. What should our response be to someone that may be watching the program?

> RM: Well I think Christ... I mean, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is very vivid. And I think, I have a hard time understanding how people who live with so much, as we do, think that they can get by without judgment when people live like **this**. And not that we are ever going to be able to alleviate poverty, 'cause some people **choose** poverty - I mean it's their **chosen** lifestyle. But there are people right here next to us that have **not** chosen this. And if we turn our backs on them, we are turning our backs on **Christ**.

[A portion of "Verge of a Miracle plays in background with more trip footage being shown.]

> RM: Well I think first of all, I think every Christian **is** called to... I think that is the commission that was given to the church, and if you are a Christian, you are a member of the church and you are responsible to see that the world is **reached**. And I think... of course there's financial backing. You know, I think there are a lot of missionaries... There are a lot of people who are here working who are very frustrated and very lonely, and you can support them by writing letters to them, supporting them. You know [he smiles], God calls us each to give what we have of our resources and...

BB: You said something real interesting there. You said everyone is called to go and that's right. The Bible said that **all** Christians "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to

every creature. Would you go as far to say that if you know, if God hasn't said "no," we **should** be going?

> RM: I know some people who I really respect who **do** say that. I think that we have to see that as the body of Christ is **going**, which means that there are gonna be people here in Guatemala. There are going to be people in Korea. I think there are going to be people in the United States.

["How Can I Keep Myself From Singing" begins playing.]

> RM: I guess the United States is a mission field. I guess we're not as Christian as sometimes we think we are, maybe.

["How Can I Keep Myself From Singing" video in its entirety.]

[Another corny skit.]

[Mission group at Guatemala International Airport. Rich is not in this scene. A CCM song sung by a male with a mellow voice (maybe titled, "Who Will Reach the Children/Lord Send Me"), plays while scenes from the trip are being shown. The song begins, "Go into the world and preach the Gospel, Signs will follow those who believe, Power and faith released to willing vessels...)]

[Corny skits/video footage/missions and Teen Mania promotions]

[Mission Aviation Fellowship video, "Kingdom of Love" by Scott Wesley Brown, The Sparrow Corp. Maybe Scott is who was singing the other song.]

BB: Hey, we're downtown here in Guatemala City. We hope you've really got a vision for what God wants to do in reaching the world through missions. We want to thank numerous people. First of all, Rich Mullins, for being our special guest. We really enjoyed working with him. And **especially** Ron Luce and Teen Mania missions, and all of these incredible young people. Did you guys have a good time? How many would like to come back next summer? [Crowd cheers] All right! God bless you. We'll see you next program. Hallelujah!

[Ends with kids' testimonies and Rich singing "The Other Side of the World."]

Executive producers: Willie George & Blaine Bartel
Produced and directed by Steven Yake
Associate producer: Chris Theis
Engineering: Keith Richardson

Written by: Blaine Bartel, Chris Theis, Steven Yake, John & Vicki Jo Witty
Production Assistants: Steve Becker, Kelly Ward, Chris Theis, Thom Casey, Lynn Richardson
Original Music Score: Brett Teegarden, c.1988 Gospel Bill Music BMI
Rich Mullins Music Videos produced by Fire By Nite, music courtesy Reunion Records; Scott Wesley Brown music video courtesy Sparrow Records.

Transcribed by Robin and Kelsie Woodson

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Considering the Lilies

kidbrothers.net/release/sum91.html

> *Did I forget to tell you that He loved lilies? It is a well-known and much overlooked fact of His life - as known and overlooked as the lilies He loved. And it's a puzzling fact, too. Why lilies? Why especially lilies?*
>
> *Maybe He loved lilies for being white, the way many people love roses for being red. Maybe it was because of the brilliant green of their long, slender stalks or the glorious, darker green of their leaves. Maybe He loved them because their blooms looked like trumpets and their leaves resembled swords. It could have been their simplicity, it might have been their commonness. It may have been because of all of that and it just as easily could have been because of none of that at all. But it seems like He loved them.*
>
> *In the Sermon on the Mount - a sermon that predated the birth of Christianity, a sermon so profound and timeless that it would endure throughout the history of Christianity and would (in fact) shape and distinguish the character of everything Christian - Jesus pointed to lilies as examples of a splendor superior to that of Solomon's. He considered them to be better dressed than kings - lilies, that is (and a lily is one of the most naked flowers known to us.) He did not apparently blush or stutter when He commanded His followers to consider them. He gave that command with the same authority that He gave the command to "let your light so shine" and the command to "turn the other cheek." It is an astonishing command - maybe given because lilies are astonishing flowers or maybe given because Jesus was an astonishing man.*
>
> *After all, He had a certain fondness for sparrows and did not consider their care and feeding beneath the dignity of God - though God's care and dignity (Jesus would assert) is beyond the comprehension of men. It was God's Spirit that led Him into the wilderness where He fasted and spent forty days (Mark tells us) "with the wild animals." It is easy, considering this attitude about lilies and sparrows, to imagine (and yes, this is imagination and certainly not revelation) that He spent that time romping with those creatures, not cowering from them and thus in His person, partially fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about a "peaceable Kingdom of the Branch."*

If this was the whole picture of Christ, we could easily write Him off as a nature lover with a heavy Hebrew orientation. But this is where the lover of lilies throws us a curve - He loved men. It was to the end that they might be saved that He came. This man who looked at flowers and loved them, also looked at an arrogant young human and loved him. He who romped forty days with the wild animals, spent and worked three years with yet a more savage and brutal species - man. He who rejoiced in God's providence for sparrows miraculously fed a crowd of 5,000 people on one occasion and 3,000 on another. His attention and affection was not won by the attractive and the beautiful - His glance and His love made things and people attractive and beautiful. The touch of His hand would give sight to the blind and from the hem of His garment flowed healing.

And even if someone would (and why should they) doubt the accounts of His miracles, I can testify myself I had never seen a lily until He showed me one. I had never heard a sparrow until His voice unplugged my ears. I had never known love until I met Him... and He is love.

So, all those things He did that we call "miracles" became believable to us because Christ, who performed them, operated out of love - and love (His love at least) has a height and depth and breadth and length that reaches beyond the dimensions of mere reason. And while reasons may be found within His love, no reason would be able to contain His love. It is possible that He loved lilies because He is love and that He feeds sparrows for the same reason. It is possibly that the evidence of His divinity lies in that love - that in light of love, miracles seem sort of unremarkable. If God can love me, the rest will follow. And Jesus Christ is, for me, the evidence of God's unreasonable and unsolicited attentiveness, His unearned favor, His incomprehensible love.

Did I forget to tell you that He loved lilies?

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23rd at 32

kidbrothers.net/release/fal91.html

When I was very young I was afraid of the dark. Like everyone who has that fear, I was afraid half the time. I hadn't yet learned how not to fear what could not be seen, let alone trust that anything beyond the dark - the unseeable - could be good. It was like I had been born with a suspicion that "something out there" was going to get me and I gave rein to my always overactive imagination, which always invented just reasons for my fear.

I thought that headlights, projected by ongoing cars as they moved across the walls of my room, were ghosts. I thought that my dad's barn was the secret headquarters of the Communists and that people became "commies" (a fate worse than death) by being kidnapped by the KGB and shipped to Russia to be brainwashed and tortured. This belief put me well within the parameters of imminent danger. I was certain that ordinary birds by day became man-eating menaces at night; that rabid dogs roamed the countryside; that poisonous rats came out of sewers and that Venus Fly Traps migrated nightly to North America.

I used to recite the 23rd Psalm to and from the barn. I could say it about three times on my way there and seldom got past "He maketh me lie down in green...." on the way back. Whenever I had to be in the barn, in the dark, alone, I would repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, the Christmas story from Luke and "You; Never Walk Alone" from Rodgers & Hammerstein's Carousel. The minute my work was done I would run to the house, bust through the door and pretend that I hadn't been afraid. I felt ashamed of those fears and was afraid that they would be with me always - even unto the ends of the world.

They weren't. I outsmarted them. I became a teenager. I discovered campouts and hayrides and girls and midnight swims. The dark looked friendlier. Communism was collapsing and I found out that plants were not migratory. I found mystery where once I had know only suspicion - intrigue where I once knew fear. I "put away childish things" - I was sophisticated, and fear of darkness could not cast a shadow of shame on my new,

teenaged, undaunted self.

And I threw the baby out with the bathwater. Since I had no fear, I believed that I had no use for the 23rd Psalm. I thought that I did not need the Lord's Prayer or any creeds or songs or assurances. I came to think that religion was a trick people played on themselves when they were confronted with a world that was too big, too overwhelming and too scary for them. No world would be too big for me. I was young and cool and the universe was my parking lot.

And then I turned thirty. I had spent six years in college and did not have a degree. I had fallen in love and was badly burned by it. I had bills to pay and life courses to choose. I was trying to keep my head while all around me the world was loosing its mind. I was faced with the consequences of my many and varied adventures...and I was alone. I became aware of my smallness and my insignificance and the world again seemed full of wonderful and dreadful possibilities. All the beauty I loved looked away from me with a terrible indifference - an indifference that left me frozen and alienated.

And one morning I was trying to hurry through my devotional time and thought it was fortunate that part of the reading was Psalm 23. I thought, "Oh I know this one well. I can skim it, I had this memorized way back when I was little and the darkness was so scary. I can pass over this quickly...."

But I could not. Because there are scarier things than the dark, and in the course of our lives we grow out of one fear and into a million others. I could not pass over it quickly because all my sophistry and self-delusion was melted away by the power of this simple statement of faith that will not be outgrown - a truth that is bigger than the fears we invent of the confidence we affect:

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures
He leads me beside the still waters
He restores my soul. He leads me in paths
of righteousness for His name's sake
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of death I will fear no evil,
for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff,

they comfort me. You prepare a table before
me in the presence of my enemies
You anoint my head with oil: my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me
all the days of my life and I will dwell
in the house of the Lord forever.

I will probably outgrow many more fears. I have lived past the luxurious years of illusory self-confidence. As I grow, I go beyond those things and ever nearer to the truth of the 23rd. I hope I still remember it when I'm 100.

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The Pursuit of Happiness

kidbrothers.net/release/spr92.html

1.

Forget about finding happiness. Happiness is not worthy of your search.

2.

Bake a cake - a really rich cake, preferably from scratch and especially if you are an inexperienced baker or a tested, tried, & notoriously awful cook. The value is in the baking more than in the cake.

3.

Call up some enemy of yours and invite that enemy to eat the cake with you. If the cake is good you may lose an enemy and gain a friend. If the cake is bad, at least vengeance is sweet.

4.

If you can't think of a single enemy, then call up a friend. Invite your friend over to eat the cake with you. If the cake is good the favor may be returned. If the cake is awful your friend may go buy one from a bakery for you. If you are without any enemies or friends, take your cake to an old folks' home. Eat it with them! If the cake is good you will no longer be without friends. If the cake is terrible you will no longer be without enemies.

Finding a friend, making an enemy - now those are things worth pursuing. Happiness may come tagged on - but even if it doesn't, at least you will have done something and established some relationships.

5.

Memorize Isaiah 40 or the first Psalm or Psalm 91. Read the closing chapters of the Book of Job. Meditate on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). Write out one of the Prison Epistles (Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Collosians) and send them to some other unhappy person.

All of this may not make you happy but it will tell you how to be holy. Once you tie that knot you may find yourself in a position to be made happy.

6.

Work hard. Clean something. Find new and more space-efficient ways of folding your clothes. Rake someone else's yard for them. If you are unhappy maybe you can help someone else be less so.

7.

Go back to the third chapter of Lamentations and then repeat after me:

"It is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.
It is good for a man to bear
The yoke while he is young.
Let him sit alone in silence
For the Lord has laid it on him."

8.

Reread the 23rd Psalm and remember that if the Lord is your shepherd, then you are in a lush pasture. You are by a still stream. If it seems otherwise to you, it may be because you would rather be happy than be God's. If this is so, then you have more reason to be happy than anyone. God has chosen you - ungrateful, decadent you - and being His is a joy and a happiness that goes beyond anything else you may seek, and in your folly settle for. God will (in His mercy) make you discontent with anything less than Him.

So we have only one step left...

9.

Rejoice.

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Reunion Turns Ten

kidbrothers.net/release/spr92art.html

Robyn Kindlund

> *In 1981, the names Michael W. Smith, Rich Mullins, Kathy Troccoli, and Kim Hill had never been heard in most homes. The song "Friends" had not yet been published, "Awesome God" wasn't even close to being written, and two men active in management, music publishing, and artist development were taking a young Italian girl from New York all over Nashville trying to get her a record deal. Seems the young lady's vocals were a bit too "sensuous", her deep alto voice a red flag to record company execs who thought the Christian music market could never cotton to such passionate singing. Meanwhile, Mike Blanton and Dan Harrell were also trying to get a record deal for a young guy from Kentucky who had a catalog of great songs, but who didn't come across as an artist as much as a songwriter.*
>
> *"I can't say we played the project for every potential A&R guy out there, but we played it for the guys that we felt like we needed to be doing business with," remembers Blanton. After striking out, yet believing that they had two potentially influential artists under their management, Blanton & Harrell began to consider a new option for getting their music out.*
>
> *"We were trying to convince people that we knew what we were doing. I don't blame anybody for not running with this any faster than they did, but I think that's when Dan and I finally sat down and said, 'This is crazy!' I think if we could go put our own production together with Word..." And history was made. Blanton & Harrell did put that deal together, and in the spring of 1982, Reunion Records was born.*
>
> *Kathy Troccoli remembers their delivery. "I was so ecstatic to think that these guys believed in me enough to say, 'You know what KT, if we can't get you a deal, we'll start our own label.' I remember when they said that. And they just did!"*

Michael W. Smith remembers, too. "My relationship with Mike and Dan was all kinda based on the Amy thing at that point. I really started playing keyboards with Amy first, and then I started bringing all these songs in, and they had just started this label. The future was definitely unknown, but there was something - how do I put it? - an extremely deep trust that I had in Mike and Dan... I thought this thing could possibly fly. At that time, obviously I probably didn't think about the future that much. I was just so thankful to even have a contract and to be involved with people like that; to be involved with Amy."

His involvement with Amy Grant, for who he was opening the "Age to Age" Tour in 1982, was the continuation of a lasting friendship with the Chapmans. Michael began writing songs with Gary in 1980. "At the time, Gary was falling in love with Amy. I don't think Amy (had fallen) in love with him yet... but Gary was diggin' that he was on the road with Amy Grant! In 1982, Michael was diggin' it for another reason - it was launching his career. "I did four songs and I ran around like a crazy man. I didn't know what to do with myself on stage, I was so nervous." He would sit at the piano, looking pretty comfortable (do you remember?). "And then I got up, and I was like a chicken with my head cut off. I just felt like I had to move; I was hyper, still am to a certain extent." The songs he brought to the "Age to Age" Tour were written for his first project, aptly titled The Michael W. Smith Project. He had sold that deal to Blanton a few months before, when he brought in "You Need a Savior" for a listen.

"I'll never forget Blanton looking at me and going, 'You know what? You bring nine other songs like that in here and we'll do a record.'" Mike Blanton tells the rest of the story: "We met and hit it off like two brothers. Immediately there was a big connection there. My offer (to make an album) was about as simple and direct as I could make it. That was off the cuff. Little did I know... three weeks later he walked in with 12 other songs."

One of those songs was called "Friends", the one Blanton calls the real hook of the album. Funny thing is, it almost went to Amy Grant. "This would be a huge song. I was always on the lookout for songs for Amy." Then there was the other part of the manager realizing that this song could break Michael W. Smith as an artist. "Well, I have to believe God intervened in a neat way there," Blanton reflects. "Michael was so ready for people to record his songs, he could have gone either way." (By the way, Smitty was

ready to go to LA to seek a pop songwriting deal, had all this fallen through.)

When the first two albums, Stubborn Love and Michael W. Smith Project, appeared on the market, listeners took to the sound, with the help of radio. The fresh, new angle on words and music began to build Reunion's customer base, and a strong group of fans for Troccoli and Smith. They were giving them something for the '80s.

"The thing that was so special about Stubborn Love (which is my favorite record that I did years ago), is that it had so much heart on it, and it was a different record for its time," Troccoli recalls. Speaking of the title song - which continues to be a radio favorite - she says, "There have been 50 million songs about God's love, but never said in that way." Smith continues with her train of thought. "Mike and Dan wanted to be different; they wanted to be fresh. They didn't want to necessarily go with the flow and do what everybody else was doing." And Blanton remembers Smitty's debut in the same light: "It was just the passion and the artistic oomph of that project that got our wheels turning. There really was a believability and an artistic statement, which is what we've tried to base our whole vision on for Reunion's being artistically driven."

Kathy Trocolli treasures her time in the studio in '82, one day actually praying the song, "Lord I Need You Now." Producer Brown Bannister, who Kathy credits with "always fighting for the heart on an album," consented to Kathy singing with nearly all studio lights off. "You can hear the cracks in my voice and a little bit of the crying, and he just kept it. Even when I've been at some desperate times, I've plugged in that song."

"Friends" was the tune from his first album that has, in a way, haunted Smith ever since. Did he look at the finished song and have any clue what its impact would be? "I knew that there was something very special about the song; I knew it was a heart-wrencher kind of thing. I thought it could be big, but I didn't have any idea that it would refuse to die. But I don't really get tired of singing it."

In 1984, Reunion released albums by Pam Mark Hall and Billy Sprague, who opened the 1985 "Friends" Tour with Troccoli and Smith. That tour, Smith's (and Reunion's) first as headliners, hit 87 cities and played to 135,000 people. "To be able to get out and do my thing and get to do it the way I want to, and then to have Kathy and Billy Sprague go out," Smith

reminisces... "We had a great time." Troccoli seconds the motion. "I got to do a major tour and be with incredible people. I loved travelling. When you're doing little churches and then you're doing that kind of a tour, it's incredible.

Reunion artist Rich Mullins can relate to that feeling. He had the formidable task of opening for Amy Grant's "Unguarded" Tour in 1986. "It was really scary. Up until that point, all I had done was play for youth groups, and all of a sudden I was in a room with 10,000 people. It was really terrifying. I don't remember the whole thing exactly, but people tell me it happened. What they say I did was just walked out and grabbed a hold of the microphone for dear life. I also was used to being able to hide behind the piano and guitar. This time, everyone else was playing instruments and I was singing. I just grabbed a hold of the mic, closed my eyes and sang."

This songwriter who sings "because I write the kind of songs not everybody wants to record" had been introduced to Mike Blanton & Dan Harrell through a cassette tape of his song "Sing Your Praise to the Lord" which they solicited for Amy Grant. Mullins remembers his earliest dealing with a record company, during his days of "dire and driving poverty."

"They called me up, and they said that they wanted Amy Grant to record it. I said I thought that was great; I didn't have any idea who Amy Grant was. They said, 'Is this published or what?' And I said, "I don't even know.' I recorded it but that's as much as I knew about it. They said they'd like to talk to me about a publishing contract, and I didn't like the idea of a contract. I said, 'I'm not interested in a publishing contract.' They said, 'Maybe you don't know who Amy Grant is' and went on to tell me how many albums she'd sold, and that really hacked me off because I thought, 'You know what? I don't care if she doesn't sell any or if she outsells Michael Jackson.' If she wants to do the song, that's fine, but I felt very insulted. I was a very overly-righteous kind of a guy at the time.

"Then they said, 'Let us fly you down here.' Well, I love to fly and I would fly anywhere in the world just for the fun of doing it. And I said, 'Sure.' That's how I first talked to them. That was a lot of fun, and I've been talking to them ever since."

As the Reunion artists' exposure and popularity grew, Blanton & Harrell decided to expand quite considerably in 1986, producing projects by five artists new to the label - Rich Mullins, Chris Eaton, Prism, Elim Hall, and

Michael Omartian. Though each project was wonderfully original for its own market, Blanton remembers 1986 as a crux, the toughest time in the history of the label to date.

"In 1986 we made some moves that at this point I would just say were prideful and very cocky (like we could) do anything and it was going to work. We were trying to do more than we were called to do." They had a focus problem. As he tells it, there was a point in '86 where they thought maybe they'd gone too far, that maybe Blanton & Harrell weren't supposed to be together. "There was the point when you finally realize that you are human and you, as much as you believe in God, have to depend on Him on a daily basis. We humbled ourselves to say that if this was not God-ordained we didn't want to be doing it anyway. He had brought us this far; if HE wanted it to go on, WE wanted to go on with it.

And go on they did. 1987 was a rebuilding year that introduced three label additions; rapper Michael Peace, The Awakening, and Renee Garcia, who had also started out with Amy Grant as a backup singer. 1987 also brought the departure of Kathy Troccoli, who decided to return to Long Island for some time out. As you read in these pages, last issue, she's baaaaaack, and obviously glad to be.

"The day I left, I remember Mike Blanton saying to me, 'KT, I just know you'll be back.' At the time, I was so fuzzy about everything that I thought, 'Are you kidding?' It's incredible to have those words ring out in my mind and know that now, at the 10-year anniversary, here I am. I think a lot of people at Reunion wanted me back, but we all had this sense that time needed to go by, because they were growing up at the label, and I was growing up here in New York. That's what's been so wonderful about the reunion with Reunion - God's timing is perfect!"

Mike Blanton understands. "There's a very strong family vibe after there's been a long time - Michael, Rich, Kathy's back here. We're in a funny little place of growth here where we still have a lot of family tradition and yet we're very aggressive as an up-and-coming record label that's trying to break artistic folks." Into the story comes Terry Hemmings.

Reunion Entertainment Group (now encasing Reunion Records and Reunion Music Group) is under the direction of president and CEO Hemmings, all of 32 years of age. If you picture Michael W. Smith's Go West Young Man theme as Reunion's plan of attack, Terry Hemmings

would have to be sitting in the front stagecoach. For the last four years, he's been carrying out the vision the label's management shares, and he sees the re-signing of Kathy Troccoli as a prime example of Reunion's aggressive direction.

"It doesn't mean every artist is going to be pop/dance, whatever, but her vision for crossing all the boundaries and really trying to evangelize to the outside of the Christian bookselling market is a place we want to go. I think that it's just fabulous that it's somebody we've walked with for a long time that we can trust to begin a new era with Reunion."

That era had its roots in Michael W. Smith, whose dream was always to carry the gospel and Christian values to the pop market place. Another rung on the ladder, though, was the signing of Kim Hill, whose 1988 debut skyrocketed her to the top of Christian radio charts. In 1991, she became another of Reunion's artists to catch the vision for pop airplay, and began targeting the college market for concerts and radio exposure.

Rick Cua and Gary Chapman had their first Reunion releases in 1988, plus the label distributed Take 6's Reprise debut. But perhaps the most memorable sound for Reunion in '89 was a single song on Rich Mullins' Winds of Heaven... Stuff of Earth (which he thought would be his last, by the way!).

"I wrote it on my way to a Christ in Youth Conference in Denver, and when I got there I was supposed to lead the worship. I knew some other people there, so I grabbed some of them and said 'OK, I just wrote this song; I don't really know how it goes, but I'm going to try it out tonight, and I need you to help me.' So I taught them the chorus, and I knew how I wanted the accompaniment to go but I couldn't play it and do (the vocals on the verses)."

Well, a friend helped Mullins do the newly-penned "Awesome God" and that night "I had about 1000 kids singing the chorus, and I was really knocked out. I knew I had done something right." Indeed. A most-requested radio song, "Awesome God", was nominated for three Dove awards and voted one of the decade's top three songs by Christian Research Report. Aside from that, it's practically part of the hymnistry by now.

In 1990, the mechanics feel into place as Geffen Records/Uni Distribution contracted with Reunion to promote and distribute its albums in the

mainstream marketplace. The same year, the Michael W. Smith Project was certified gold, with sales over 500,000. New artists in 1990 were Wes King and Steve Grace.

But 1991 was a year of action for Reunion Records. Kim Hill and Wes King opened the "Heart In Motion" Tour for Amy Grant. Kathy Troccoli's first single for pop radio "You've Got a Way" was released. And new acts Mike-E (a rapper from Detroit), Michael James (a Texas balladeer) and Hoi Polloi (a rock band hailing from New Zealand) continued to round out the label in style, lending to outreach in all types of circles. With "Place In This World" Michael W. Smith brought onto the Billboard Hot 100 a #6 song from a Christian record label. The response to the song, on the heels of Reunion Music's published song, "Baby, Baby" was slow to start, but with every week picked up speed. And suddenly a public was buying Go West Young Man, an album with anything-but-subtle Christian messages. "I love that part of it!" Smith says. And Terry Hemmings is excited.

"Michael's broken down a tremendous wall that has existed for 10 years between our Christian music world and the pop music world. He had all the elements - in the traditional secular mold - of a teen idol. I prefer to refer to him as a great role model." Regardless of how you explain it, the public likes Michael. And Michael loves the public. Does he remember the first time he heard "Place In This World" on pop radio? "Oh yeah..." he exclaims. "I just lost it. I just welled up with tears. I was goin', 'this is unbelievable. This is absolutely unbelievable!' I'm the last one who wants to be overly spiritual, but I knew God was in it."

Vision is a word that comes up often with this crowd. "There's no lack of vision here at the company," Smith will tell you. Hemmings clears up the fog surrounding the word with a description of the vision of the Reunion Entertainment Group:

Our vision is not to force people to be somewhere they don't want to be. It's not to strictly try to find, sing, and develop artists that want to be pop stars. Part of our vision is to work with people who have a Christian perspective on music which is similar to ours - more evangelical in nature - than to continue to service only the church and the smaller church market with music that only serves itself. In addition, we have a strong commitment to the segment of our roster who feel a strong call directly to the church. I think that Michael is a good example of an artist who can service the church with a great choral work or a hymn and also write music that speaks

to a much broader audience - and in doing so, create a platform for himself to share his experiences and his beliefs on a national basis that you can't do by focusing the music on a very small target.

"I don't by any means think that every company in our business should be doing what we're doing, because everybody has their own unique vision. If we were all doing the same things, it'd be really crowded. But we feel like there are a few artists and a few career tracks that we're supposed to be involved in that do what Michael's done and what Kathy and Kim and some others do. We are looking at singing and working with some artists whose records won't even go out in the Christian market. We've removed a lot of the qualifiers for what people would traditionally look for in Christian music."

What these Christian businessmen hope for is a product that has artistic integrity (see Kim Hill's Brave Heart for a fine example!), mass appeal (take your pick), and an uncompromising spiritual truth (again, it's everywhere). It's a fine balance, but they're putting heart and soul into the goal. And their artists - not to mention millions of listeners - are reaping the benefits.

What was born of necessity has grown to be what you could call a necessity; a Christian music label showing great leadership in business, ministry, and art. Michael W. Smith has seen the young upstart struggle through infancy, the toddler years, and no pre-teen growth spurts, and has been a party to countless official and unofficial conversations. His overwhelming impression?

"There's something different about Reunion. They have vision that won't quit. It was always this little thing inside me going, 'You know what - I won't be surprised if these guys take it to another planet a few years from now.'"

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Washing At Dark

kidbrothers.net/release/sum92.html

> *Someday I shall be a great saint - like those you see in the windows of magnificent cathedrals. I will have a soul made of sunlight and skin as clear as the stained glass panels that make their skin, and I will shine like they do now - I will shine with the glory that comes over those who rise up early and seek the Lord....*
>
> *But I do not shine so now - especially not in the morning. In fact, I grimace until noon, I would never be mistaken for a stained glass saint, though at 7 AM I might be grey and grotesque as a gargoyle. By faith I accept that "God's commands are not burdensome," but right now, I am not grown in that measure of grace that frees me to exalt in this particular command to seek Him "early in the morning."*
>
> *Right now it is dusk and far in the east the sky is already being inked with the shadow that our earth makes of itself and some nearer stars are waking there. I am in a park in Indianapolis, Indiana and right now these great trees are casting no shadows; the greens of their leaves are holding the last rays of sun already set and the sky in the west is bright and turquoise and it shines like a semi-precious stone - as if any stone could be "semi-precious". And over all that I can see, over my motorcycle and the trunks and limbs of these hardwood giants, over this close cut lawn and the now abandoned tennis courts and baseball diamonds, over the sky (still fading, still and newly exquisite) and over me, a great peace washes. It comes up from the ground and down from the heavens - a deep peace breathed out by a universe that surrounds itself again to the embrace of its Creator - its God, who is to be sought by His saints in the hours of early mornings but condescends to seek out even sinners at dusk and washes them at evening in the peace of His presence and throws round their shoulders the cloak of His acceptance and puts on their fingers the ring of His pleasure - the pleasure He takes in them when He meets them here on the road even before they could get home, when He echoes in the evening the hymn He sang for them at dawn.*
>
> *Someday I will rise up like the sun in the morning - someday I will shine like the saints who watch from cathedral windows. I know this, not because of*

any evidence I have produced of myself, but because of the witness of His scriptures, because of the evidence of His grace, and because of the testimony of this sky that washes over me at dusk.

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The World According to Rich

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Roberta Croteau

The word enigmatic rarely escapes any written description of Reunion Records artist and songwriter, Rich Mullins. For the past decade he has continued to live up to that moniker with 6 albums that have added a unique new color to the landscape of Christian music. His music is rich with diversity, blending non-pop standard instruments like bagpipes and dulcimers with strong quartets and electric guitars. The sounds are matched with evocative lyrics that often contrast the simplicity of his music, earning him accolades as one of today's most talented songwriters. His newest album, The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 2 continues the mystery and the wisdom of this poet musician...

He thinks he's a jerk. His friends think he's a genius. Reviewers call him enigmatic, while his record company bills him as "a poet for the common man." His manager describes him as one of the few people she actually sees Christ living through. And if you're someone without access to your feelings, his producer believes Rich Mullins would likely strike you as "an irrelevant egghead." Christian music fans, it seems, just enjoy an artist who can state the truth simply enough that it becomes profound... or profoundly enough that it all becomes very simple.

If you get the chance to listen to Rich Mullins speak, you begin to understand what all the fuss is about. What he has to say and how he chooses to say it is nothing, if not memorable, and you'll likely walk away from the experience thinking about a whole lot more than just music. His elfin grin belies the philosopher inside and a child-like wonder of the world he lives in finds good company with a healthy dose of honest cynicism toward status quo Christianity.

"Most people in the industry don't take me very seriously. I think they think I'm cute and I really think I'm dangerous. Sometimes some of the things I say, I know, are positively, absolutely despised by evangelicals."

His song, "Jacob and 2 Women" from Volume 1 was a good example.

"Everyone always wants to know what I meant... I don't believe that Christianity is a moral religion. I don't think that it's essentially about morals. I don't buy most of the prohibitions that the church puts on people. I utterly accept the prohibitions that the Scriptures put on us... I'm not a libertine. It's just a song that says some of that."

Producer Reed Arvin (who has worked on all 6 Mullins' projects) has trouble even talking about his friend's writing, and it's not because of its sometimes provocative nature. "I can't think about his writing without being emotional, or getting wiped out," he says. "It's like literature. You read a story and you're not sure what it's about, but it makes you have the feeling more than someone telling you what it's about. And Rich doesn't actually tell you what it's about sometimes. And you don't know why, but you can't stop crying. What is that? Nobody knows." Arvin continues, "I put Rich in an unparalleled category as a lyricist in Christian music. To me, there's Rich and then there's everyone else. The only reason that he didn't get Steven Curtis Chapman's voice is because God said, 'Well, that's just too much. That's not going to be, 'cause you'd be insufferable.'"

Boy Like Rich

They say we are all the product of our heritage, our own history and the choices we make along the way...and if you've heard Rich's popular song from Volume 1, "Boy Like Me/Man Like You," you got a brief peek at some of the memories that shaped his growing up years. The Indiana born son says his childhood was like a "Norman Rockwell painting...with a few minotaurs from Picasso strategically placed around."

The Rockwell influence is seen in his snapshot memories of family and growing up, like the time his great grandmother tried to explain just how old the trees in the front yard were. "She said they were old enough that when Abraham Lincoln lived in Indiana, he may have walked under those trees. So I went out and saluted. For a long time I just sat under the tree with my hand over my head, thinking Abraham Lincoln stood here."

Or the time his grandfather took Rich to the Courthouse where he worked: "I remember whispering because it looked so holy to me with the big vaulted ceilings and I thought, wow, this is what law and order come out of. There's a granite Ten Commandments on the lawn of the Courthouse and I thought that it was the actual original Ten Commandments, which I thought

was very funny that they would end up in Richmond, Indiana."

And then there was his older cousin Jim, whose hand-me-downs Rich could hardly bear to wait for. "He was a big hero of mine. I wanted to be like him so bad I could taste it. I couldn't wait to be big enough to wear his clothes and if they had holes in them I liked it even better because he had worn them down and I thought maybe some of the virtue would rub off on me."

But the idyllic memories were tempered with the traditional 'growing pain demons,' and for Rich a lot of that came from dad and son not seeing much eye to eye.

"My father was Appalachian... which is a nice way of saying hillbilly. ***His*** *father was a coal miner, and his father died of alcohol poisoning. His father died in the Federal Pen for counterfeiting. So I had this terrific heritage to follow in..."*

Growing up in the late sixties and seventies, most of the 'missed eye-contact' was expectedly political, at a time when a lot of values were being questioned: "He responded by being very dogmatic. My cousins are questioning the Vietnam War and my father furiously and blindly defends the U.S. involvement without knowing why. And he didn't know how to defend the answers, so he decided to attack the questions. And I highly resented that. I remember, in high school we had these mock elections and because my family was Democratic, I decided to campaign for the Republicans...just 'cause I was a stinker all along."

As Rich recalls it, the quickly deteriorating relationship with his father was quickly matched and probably ignited by his growing mistrust of a lot of the 'sacred institutions' that were beginning to fall around him.

"I remember a particular rape case that was dismissed, that there was really no question about. And it was a little legal battle, but it had nothing to do with the fact that a woman was really raped. What it really had to do with was that the police had failed to go through some technicality. Not to say that law isn't important, but all of a sudden all these things were happening and I was going... I thought this was about justice, but it's not. Maybe the Vietnam War really isn't about democracy. Maybe it's about something else. And of course, then Ford pardoned Nixon, which was a very powerful moment for me, because what that said to me very clearly

was that the government of my country was no longer responsible to the people.

"So my dad was defending all this that I was beginning to question and he was very threatened by the fact that I was questioning things. My junior year in high school I realized that of the Ten Commandments, the one that bothered me the most was 'honor your mother and father.' And I was going, 'That can't be right. This is one big mistake in the Bible.' And I began to really pray about that. I kind of came to realize, even though I couldn't articulate it at the time, that boy, until you come to terms with your heritage, you will never be at peace with yourself. Now I realize that if I cannot honor my father I will never honor anybody. So I began to really pray about it and I think there was really a bit of a miracle."

The 'miracle' began on a trip to Kentucky (his father's home) where the Mullins family gathered for an aunt's funeral. "The graveyard was full of the Mullins family and my dad started walking me to tombstone after tombstone and telling me the stories of how they all died. He told me how many children they had and how many children died in infancy, with the little stones that had no names on them. And all of a sudden I began to realize that his life had not been like mine. And that same weekend, you know how at funerals people reminisce... they started talking bout the past and all of a sudden I saw my dad for the first time, not as a symbol of authority that I resented, but as a little boy. They talked about the little boy that had gone tot he top of Black Mountain and taken the chain off his bicycle and coasted down just to see how far he could go before he wrecked. And a young boy and his friends who found weeds on the mountain that they would collect, dry out, smoke and get high from. And they of course were all laughing about this. It's an interesting thing to do with kids in the room 'cause we all went 'YOU DID THAT?!' And I thought, man, he went through everything that every kid goes through. And I believe now, that in the literal sense of the word, God miraculously helped me to see my dad as a person, and not as a symbol. And I think, in terms of my growing up, that was a very big moment for me. I think that has shaped a good bit of my life ever since then."

Learning to Grow Young

The World As Best As I Remember It, Volume 1,

explored faith of the past, with songs retelling the stories of Jacob, Rachel, Daniel, and Esther, as seen through Rich's eyes. Volume 2 hits a little closer to home, as Mullins reminisces on his own struggles with faith through his friends ("What Susan Said"), his family ("Growing Young"), and the church ("To Tell Them"). And more and more each day he admits to learning "even I can be changed."

"I think we all come to see each other symbolically rather than as we really are. And one of the big goals that I have that I fall short of frequently is to see people not as vehicles. And when I don't like someone, I have to say, 'You know what? There is probably a time when that person had a first date and got a nose bleed from being nervous. And maybe he's had the same experiences that I've had. And maybe he's not grumpy, he's just lonely.' We can't see each other very clearly, but I'm learning. I've realized that I was willing to be obedient to God as long as his commands made sense to me. But I wasn't willing to be obedient to God when they stopped making sense. Whenever you decide that logic is more binding than devotion, you miss the mark. It's like there are some people that when you go into their house you should take your shoes off, not because it's absolutely morally right, but because that is what they want. And there are other people who you go into their house and you should not take your shoes off. Not because of any moral absolutes, but just because that's their preference. And at some point I began to say to

myself, what if, instead of thinking in terms of moral absolutes, what if I just think for a while in terms of, maybe God just has preferences that I don't understand but they're God's preferences. And if I love my friends there are things that I do because I love to be with them. Why can't I love God that much? Why can't I love God enough to say, 'if this offends you, then I don't want to do it.' But I guess you grow little by little and you see more and more how little you see. One of the things that I'm finally coming around to is that as much as I wish I was St. Francis, as much as I wish I was a Mother Theresa, as much as I would aspire to empty myself, there's an awful lot of me left in here."

His friend Beaker might not agree. If it's true that the best way to lose a friend is to live with them, time's not up yet for Rich and his sir-name-less cohort/writing partner and fellow musician roommate. The two have formed their own tongue-in-cheek monastic order, 'Kid Brothers Of Saint Frank,' and work together out of their home base in Wichita, Kansas. Rich says friends are a painful blessing. "Friendship has a lot to do with enduring people while they go through their weird times. Beaker is a very close friend, who in the period of time we've known each other, has definitely exposed in me everything that I hate about myself. He has drawn out of me all kinds of things that I would love to have the illusion didn't exist."

Stumbling Heavenward

*Writer Fredrick Buechner talks about the difference between something being a canvas, where, presumably, everything is right in front for you to view, and something being a transparency, where it is less what we see **in** it than what we see **through** it that matters. Rich Mullins colors a canvas with his music, but he himself remains a transparency. His honest revelations of the struggles in his own life have brought those who listen that much nearer the truth of the One who lives through him.*

Mullins often likes to quote Robert Frost, who described a good poem as 'an immortal wound' - something that strikes you so hard, you never get over it. As a writer, Rich has left some of those scars on Christian music fans who've had 'ears to hear,' and Rich's World, as best as he can remember it, is a stunning reminder of the joy in the journey. And so he remains, like Abraham, a fellow sojourner on the road to righteousness, who discovered faith even in his darkness... and found that sometimes, even the night was beautiful.

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Making/Being Made

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> *The Bible is a very great book. It is the written witness to God's revelation of Himself in His Word: Jesus Christ. And, if you like, you can make a great deal of it.*
>
> *You can speculate about it: This will make you a philosopher and people will think you are deep and very smart.*
>
> *You can pontificate on it: This will make you a preacher and people will marvel at your courage and gift for oratory.*
>
> *You can adulate it: This will make you its number one fan. You can display your very fine collection of its various versions all over your house.*
>
> *You can attack it: This will make you a skeptic and people will admire your honest, blind determination to live in your grim, faithless little world.*
>
> *You can adapt it: This will make you a youth pastor or a Christian musician or a feminist theologian or a popular author. You, too, can be the icing on a cake.*
>
> *You can systematize it: This will make you a theologian and people will quote you and regard those quotes as some sort of authority.*
>
> *You can criticize it: This will make you a scholar - and those who are not put off by your egg-headedness will confer on you M.A.'s and D.D.'s.*
>
> *You can theorize about it: This will make you an expert in biblical slants on contemporary issues like political science, psychology, church growth, economics, sex, and marriage.*
>
> *You can ponder it: This will make you a mystic and people will turn to you for spiritual advice (and from you when then get it).*
>
> *You can practice it: This will make you a model citizen - a fair, generous, and righteous (if somewhat uptight) person.*
>
> *Of course, what we make of the Bible will never be as great a thing as what*

the Bible will - if we let it - make of us. For that which is born of the flesh - our human understanding and handlings - is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit - God's revelation of Himself and the power of that revelation to enliven us - is spirit. The will of man will not ultimately prevail against the will of God. It is the will of God that we should know Him as He has revealed Himself and that will has not only survived the arrogant attacks of scientific and "enlightened" men, it has (even more miraculously) thrived in spite of our best intended, though sadly misguided, at "rightly dividing" that seamless robe of revelation.

So, let us press on with no faith in our own understanding and nothing but faith in the Truth that is too great to be diminished by our feeble minds and too great not to transform us. Salvation comes from God, not from our cleverness. The Bible is a very great book. Let us submit to it so God may do the great work of making us into a great people.

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Boats and Burning Bushes

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The word "sacrament" is a non-biblical word used to describe something that may be loosely or strictly biblical. It comes from the Latin sacramentum - a military oath of allegiance taken by a soldier, an oath that bound him to his mission, his post, his commander, etc. Common usage has kind of distorted the word "sacrament" (much as it has the meaning of other words - like "love" and "anointing" and now "family"), but if we look back - if we dare look back - we may find some power behind this word.

If we look back - say to the Prophet Isaiah - we can see God describing Himself as a warrior - a soldier sworn to waging peace, expanding the borders of justice, armed with love and truth. If we dare to look back we may even see God not as this nice, passive, passionless "Breck lady" looking mystical thing, and we may discover a maniac God, a God who is wild and ferocious, uninhibited by our arrogance, unafraid of any cruelty - a God who is passionate about people, One who would truly go to Hell and back out of love for us.

And if we dare look back, maybe we can then look around and see all the oaths of allegiance through which He has shown His faithfulness to us - bread and wine and water, even frail shadowy little human commitment, the rainbow.

He showed his allegiance to us in the boat that Noah built, in the bush that Moses saw burning, in Aaron's budding rod and in David's five smooth stones. We can see it in the Wall in Jerusalem, in the fact of the Bible, in every star that pierces the night, in the change of the seasons, and in every new morning.

Maybe we can hear it in the chirping of crickets or in the sound of old friends laughing, feel it in the hope and the yearning within us that will not (even when we try to note it) go away. Maybe the heavens do declare the glory of God: "and the skies proclaim the works of His hands." Maybe they themselves are his proclamation, His declaration, His sacrament to love.

Some of us say that there are seven sacraments, some say there are only two. Some say that there are none - maybe we're all wrong. Maybe there

are countless sacraments - countless "oaths" of God's allegiance to His own glory and our hope of salvation.

There is, of course, one very great and startling one - the empty tomb and the One whose body laid in it and then walked out of it on its own two feet. Next to Jesus, maybe all the heavens and the hills of the earth, all the music and works of art, all the rainbows and wines and burning bushes and boars seem like tiny tokens - great as they are - and maybe the issue is not so much about how and through what God swears His love, as it is about whether or not God does love.

"And this is how we know what love is, that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us."

I hope you see the faithfulness of God in everything He has made. I hope you learn to trust that all of this is His care sworn to you. But mostly, I hope you know Jesus through whom God has wildly and ferociously loved us. I hope you know and that you become sacramental to your neighbor who God also loves passionately. I hope you leave them little doubt about His love and the victory Jesus won over hate and death.

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The Way We Were

kidbrothers.net/release/spr93.html

> *Before we had stifled the cross into a symbol, before we had softened grace into a sentiment, before we had systematized the power and mystery of God's greatest revelation of Himself into a set of dogmas, we were the children that we must become again.*
>
> *And when we were those wee kids (you remember, don't you?) every stable was sacred because it was in a stable that Christ was born, and every star was an angel of God's presence because He had told Abraham to see in them the number of blessings to come. Every tree had hands to clap and mountains had voices, pebbles could penetrate the helmets on the heads of giants, sins were shameful and love was irrepressible.*
>
> *And we prayed powerful, profound prayers - prayers so direct and wonderfully indiscreet that we blush now when we remember them - the prayers and the faith that lifted them up to God in those heights where we used to meet Him - heights that we now view drearily and dizzily and doubtfully.*
>
> *We used to pray: "Into my hear, into my heart, Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today, come in to stay, Come into my heart, Lord Jesus..." and we can't grasp it much more now than we could then, only it didn't stop us from praying. When we were little, we gave ourselves over to faith. Now we are big, and too heavy to rise above our own understanding.*
>
> *When we were kids we sang for the joy of singing, we colored and cut and pasted for the fun of doing it. We ran for the love of running and laughed and got scared and saw the world as a real place full of real dangers and real beauty and real rights and wrongs.*
>
> *And if the cross is more than a symbol (and it is), and if grace is more than a sentiment (and, thank God, it is), if Jesus Christ is really God's revelation of Himself and not the product of human imagination (and He is), then we will become the children we once were and must become again. Stables will be temples, stars will be guarantees, "the trees of the fields will clap their hands and the mountains and the hills will break forth in singing..." We will pray and run and work and give ourselves over to faith. And God will be*

our Father and His Kingdom will be our home, for we will be those children we once were, and "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven..."

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The Flight of the Philistine

kidbrothers.net/release/sum93.html

It was sometime near the end of the twentieth century, somewhere between England and France on a ferry loaded with bleary-eyed tourists and weary looking locals, sometime in the morning - a morning that had not distinguished itself with any kind of sunrise, one that was just kind of colorless and undark.

It was near the end of that cursed Age of Enlightenment, when the supreme God of Reason had puttered out and the court of the world was cluttered with computer clowns and information peddlers, where ideas passed hands like a currency that was not backed by gold. It was where and when I met her and she was pretty and mildly likeable and this was a conversation. And although her thoughts were vague, she voiced them with something that sounded like conviction.

She said, "I don't believe in war. I can't imagine anything that would make someone want to fight another human being, let alone kill one. I don't believe in war and if everyone wouldn't believe in it, then we could all be at peace."

Of course, you can never be sure what someone means when they talk about peace or belief or most anything else, but I wasn't too sold on the idea that disbelief in war would bring about peace. I felt kind of embarrassed - kind of Philistine. I could easily imagine wanting to fight another human being. I could imagine hunger and I could imagine (or, more honestly, I could remember) greed. I could imagine rage over injustice and I could imagine honest (even if mistaken) fear. I could imagine a woman two men would wrangle over. I'd like to be the sort of man two women might quarrel over. I can imagine, remember and even presently see a lot of things that would make someone want to fight another person. And worse, I suspect that a world emptied of these things would be no more peaceful - it would just be more dead.

The person who doesn't believe in gravity is no more apt to fly than the person who does believe in it. Chances are, the person who believes in

gravity (who recognizes it, studies it, appreciates its power and properties and comes to terms with them) is more likely to discover the secret of flight than the person who denies the reality of weight. They will mount up with wings like eagles while the others sink into desperate, deliberate and useless denial. They both will dream but one will wake in flight and the other will crush himself in the comfort of sleep.

We walk by faith and not by sight - not because we are blind, but because faith gives us the courage to face our fears and puts those fears in a context that makes them less frightful. We walk by faith and not by sight because there are places to go that cannot be seen and the scope of our vision is too small for our strides. Faith is not a denial of facts - it is a broadening of focus. It does not deny the hardness of guitar strings, it plucks them into a sweetness of sound.

I don't know how that sets at the present - it probably sounds foolish - but I wish I could have said something like that (only more persuasive and even mildly brilliant) to that girl on the ferry that morning on the English Channel on this end of the Age of Enlightenment, so near to yet another century of war and longing for peace and faith and denial and gravity and flight. Maybe I'll meet her there, maybe you will. She's very pretty - brown hair and eyes and all. If you see her, tell her that the Philistine on the ferry is flying and at peace and that he hopes she is as well. Tell her, "we walk by faith and not by sight." We fly that way, too.

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Attics & Temples

kidbrothers.net/release/fal93.html

> *My new apartment is in the attic of Jim and Megan's house. It's a big old one-roomer with a mind of its own - a cacophony of lines that occur at approximately 45 to 90 degree angles, with floors that sort of redefine "level." This attic has it's own idea of what "square" means; its studs have their own interpretation of the classic 24 inch center. Its walls are loosely vertical and the whole thing is about two weeks away from being much more than a lot of potential. Right now it is resistant to change - openly hostile to my ideas of what it ought to be. But slowly, surely, occasionally even patiently I am (with the help of some friends, a hammer, a saw, some nails and a wrecking bar) enlightening it, changing its self-concept, convincing it that it is not merely an ugly, old attic - it is a great space that I would like to inhabit and be on friendly terms with - a space full of promise and beauty and order and life.*
>
> *I suspect that is wants to cooperate, but it's hard and I must be patient. Whoever it was that shaped the attic before me did so with some pretty big nails, deep cuts, hard hammers and rough saws. They considered the attic to be wasted space, storage space - a distance between the roof and the ceiling - a buffer zone and not much else. Someone else came along and closed it in for a smoking room; a place for those ignoble activities that would be inappropriate in the "house proper." They slopped the walls with cheap, nasty paneling and put in a bathroom, covered the floors with ugly carpet and stunk it up with a tobacco habit.*
>
> *Sometimes in the heat of the toil of my labor I give in to fits of selfish rage - frustration more over my lack of skill than over my apartment's progress. But late at night when I look over the piles of dust and dry wall and knee-deep debris that remain during this reconstructive effort, I am strangely moved by the place and I proclaim the gospel to it softly. I say, "I know how it hurts to be torn up. I am often choked on the litter left by my own remodeling. I know what it's like to settle (by the grave act of a strong will) into the despair of believing that you are wasted space. I have felt the blows of heavy hammers that nailed me to a sense of uselessness. I have been shaped by some pretty careless workers who came to the task of making me and lacked any craftsmanship or artistry. I know the pain of*

wanting to be changed and yet being distrustful of changes, of wanting to be worked on, but being suspicious of the intentions of the Worker. But here is some good news: He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. However messy it may be now, however confusing and scary it appears, however endless the task may seem, we will some day be glorious, beautiful, alive! There is much tearing out to do - a lot to give up. No thin coat of new paint, no shallow, petty piety will do. It's not good enough to cover up imperfection, it must be corrected. Art, beauty, function - these things take time. They may take till the day of Christ Jesus."

But we are not wasted space, we are temples of a Being greater than ourselves, temples being built to be inhabited and brought to life. Though we may not understand the process, our Rebuilder does. We are His workmanship and the place where He lives.

Little attic, do not despair! I'm being made by a Master Carpenter. I'm learning a little about building too.

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Rags to Riches

kidbrothers.net/release/fal93art.html

If you've ever owned a Rich Mullins album or been to one of his concerts, you've undoubtedly already been introduced to Beaker. For the past five years the two "Kid Brother's of St. Frank" (as they call their merry band) have been roommates, songwriting partners, traveling comrades, fellow-students, and friends.
Who better than to talk about the rich new collection of songs and stories that make up Mr. Mullins' latest tour de force known as A Liturgy, a Legacy, and a Ragamuffin Band - and give a little insight into the mind that put the words and music together

"So, what's he like? No, I mean what's he really like?"

You wouldn't believe how many times I've been asked this question. And what are my options for possible responses? How do you answer a question like that? It's like trying to tell someone what a sunset looks like out in the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas. Or describing the way an affectionate dog's tongue feels when you find it unexpectedly on your face. Or it would be like answering someone if they asked you to describe a painting by Monet. There are so many ways that people are the same and yet the ways that they are unique are as numerous as the constellations. And I'm not quite sure which it is that makes a person a person - the similarities or the differences.

Rich Mullins is my friend - this much I can tell you. A large part of me wants to leave it at that. To be able to say to you that he is my friend and **that** is what he is really like. No more, no less. I could let you fill in all the blanks. Because, don't we all, in some sense, see people more as we want to see them than as they really are? I love it when C.S. Lewis says:

> *"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors." (The Weight of Glory)*

So, does that tell you anything of what I think Rich is really like? Do you see that even after living with him for the last five years he seems to me just like Cheryl, who is our travel agent, or Richard, who delivers the mail, or Israel, a little boy who lives in the Philippines, or this guy named Brian who is in my American Studies class? Can you see that I believe none of us are "mere mortals" and that it is quite possible that every human being is a miracle - no more and no less amazing than the person we think the least of or the person we think nothing of at all?

How's that for an introduction to Rich? There's always hope that I'll get with it before my space runs out and dive into the real Rich Mullins. I guess I could tell you a few things, but you must remember that I am biased, opinionated, and limit in my perspective. It will be magnanimously difficult to maintain any kind of objectivity and you must promise to keep that and all of what I write in some sort of perspective.

With that out of the way, let me tell you couple of secrets. Are you ready? Rich loses things. It's not a big secret to those around him, but you might not have known it. He loses stuff all the time. Sometimes it drives him crazy. Sometimes it drives everyone else crazy; especially when it's the last set of keys to the car that's supposed to take us to a concert that is two hours away and starts in forty-five minutes. But most of the time, we all laugh. Rich loses something and then we laugh. He laughs and we laugh. It's such a bizarre reaction, but I've figured out why. It is because each has discovered that he doesn't have to take himself too seriously. It would be pretty easy for him to believe that the world, his world, revolves around him. It would not take much for him to think that he knows everything. I can tell you, since we have spent the last five years working, traveling and writing together, he does know just about everything - with a few critical exceptions - on being, the location of the ever important and ever disappearing car keys. Since I've got you going, how about another secret?

We never know when it's going to hit him. You can't predict it. You can't see it. You can't really feel it, but once it strikes, you have no doubt that it's there. So, do you want to know what IT is? I ought not to tell you - but I am not much different than most people I know - I struggle so much with doing what I ought to do and with not doing what I should. Oh well, I've started into it, I might as well tell you now. The secret is that Rich gets obsessed. You're never quite sure what he is going to get obsessed with, but once he is there is almost no going back. It could be an obsession with a movie (we saw Dances With Wolves thirteen times in its first three weeks in the theater). It could be with drawing plans for a cabin (he's been working on some since I've know him). Or it could be with trying to finish a song. I guess he's not alone. We have an ongoing abuse of one another over who gets obsessed more. Sometimes it just hits you: like you go through days and days without thinking about your fingernails - then, with no warning, you realize they need to be

trimmed. Suddenly everything revolves around trying to find clippers - it feels like life will not be right until the obsession is eased. Now, you might think that nail clipping or movie going or architectural designs are merely trivialities. That Rich, or I should be obsessed, you may think, is dangerous - almost sinful. I think that we sometimes fail to see the strength and the weaknesses of things. If I had called it "having an incredible capacity for perseverance," or even "having a desire to never give up or quit" maybe it would not have sounded as revolting. There are dangers - the object of our obsession may be unhealthy, hurtful or even unholy. But the flip-side is just as good as the bad is bad. There can be a determination to love, and obsessions with living in peace, and an intense desire to live in grace.

Well, that's about all there is to that secret - you want another? Nope, I can't do it. You'll have to take what I gave you ... but, if you'd like to know what Rich has been working on, then keep on reading.

Sometime in October when the leaves demand you attention and the air smells crisp, when the excitement of a new school year has turned to drudgery and wool sweaters are pulled from moth protected trunks to replace tank-tops, Reunion Records will release A Liturgy, A Legacy and A Ragamuffin Band. You should buy it (sorry, I told you I was biased). Anyway, the idea of Rich's newest project was to gather a bunch of friends together, lock them in a studio and create an album about life, and God and worship. He wanted to come up with a recording that was a collaboration of the talents, the musical and personal quirks, the insights, and the feelings of the whole group; this group became the Ragamuffin Band. The idea grew into reality somewhere near Anderson, Indiana, sometime around March 1993. People from Kansas, people from Texas and people from Tennessee spent a couple of weeks putting together and album that represents fairly well who Rich Mullins really is. In fact, this article wanes in comparison. But come to think of it, it would probably be far better for you to find out from A Liturgy, A Legacy and a Ragamuffin Band, maybe even from this article, who God is and what He's like, rather than gaining insight into the life and personality of some Christian musician. And, you know what? Rich would prefer it that way. **That's** what he's really like.

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Three Things, Four

kidbrothers.net/release/win94.html

> *"There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand: The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, The way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a maiden." Proverbs 30:18-19*
>
> *I may have liked the sayings of Agur when I was a kid because they got in at the end of the book of Proverbs like third string players get in for a few seconds in the fourth quarter of a game that is already safe or unsalvageable. Solomon pretty much dominates the first 22 1/2 chapters, the anonymous "Wise" gets the next 7 1/2, then Agur gets one and finally Lemuel. Lemuel concentrates on wine and women; Agur focuses on song.*
>
> *Four things on earth are small,*
> *yet they are extremely wise:*
> *Ants are creatures of little strength,*
> *yet they store up their food in the summer;*
> *Coneys are creatures of little power,*
> *yet they make their home in the crags;*
> *Locusts have no king,*
> *yet they go forth in ranks;*
> *A lizard can be caught with the hand,*
> *yet it is found in king's palaces. Proverbs 30:24-28*
>
> *I might have liked Agur because he had such an ugly name. Few people really like their own names - not many have as much reason to hate it as did Agur. Most people dislike their names much like they dislike their noses or ears or eye-brows - it's pretty much just a symptom of adolescent self-contempt. I just think that no matter how uninflated his ego may have been, he may likely have wanted a more flattering name - at least maybe one slightly less appalling.*
>
> *Two things I ask of You, oh Lord;*
> *do not refuse me before I die;*
> *Keep falsehood and lies far from me;*
> *give me neither poverty nor riches,*

but give me my daily bread.
Otherwise I might have too much and
disown You and say, "Who is the Lord?"
Or I may become poor and steal
and so dishonor the Name of my God. Proverbs 30:7-9

Of course he came to terms with it - given his sense of wonder and his practical approach to prayer. He didn't apparently fuss over religiosity - there is nothing fancy in what he asked of God. He may have gone a little overboard with requests (considering that he says he is asking two favors and ends up asking for five) but I suspect that God took into account his spirit instead of checking his math. Agur might have snuck the answer to his prayer into his very request - a guy with this bad math may have had no idea how much he had or didn't have, he may not have known if he was poor or wealthy. He knew only enough to ask God to be involved - to, in fact, be the focus of his life, the source of his security, the object of his desires.

It is sometimes amazing what you can find tucked away in these much overlooked books of the Bible. It is amazing what shines through the sometimes supposed cracks. It's wonderful what a third-string, nearly unknown guy with an ugly name and a poorly developed sense of math might have to say to us.

Don't stop reading. Don't stop listening. There are many things that are too amazing for all of us, many more that can empower us beyond what we can understand.

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Playing Second Fiddle

kidbrothers.net/release/mayjun94.html

> *It is always important that a fiddle should remember (and, who guess that it could forget?) that it is a fiddle - that it is wood and wire and polish and glue and not much more than that - except, of course, in the caress of a fiddler. There, in that hand, on that shoulder, under that chin - all of its lightness delicately balanced and its strings skillfully bowed - it becomes a voice. There, out of the hollow body and thin skin of this little peculiarly shaped box, the fiddler forges his music. There, in a sense, the word becomes flesh, the fiddler's idea becomes concrete, shimmering concrete - reality. And this, of course, is what a fiddle dreams of at night in the dark of its closet, in the stifling closeness of its case.*
>
> *No fiddle - at least none that I have ever met - dreams of being delivered out of the aforementioned darkness to be displayed in a glass showcase. Fiddles don't have eyes - or the kind of intelligence needed to imagine a concept as foreign to them as "vision." This is why you never see a fiddle fussing over itself; primping and preening and staring at mirrors. This is why it is luckier to be a fiddle than to be a prince, and where the wisdom of that phrase "ignorance is bliss" is most fully shown. Fiddles do not care to be seen, so they do not mind being small, which is handy for the fiddler.*
>
> *Besides having no eyes, fiddles also (and this may come as a shock to you) have no ears. For a fiddle, music is not a matter of "sound." They not only cannot imagine "sight" or "being seen" - they cannot imagine "sound" or "being heard" - I suspect that even if you could convince one of the experience of hearing, you'd be hard pressed to convince one of the value of hearing. You must understand, fiddles are more grave and serious than even columnists. That does not mean that they have no sense of humor - it only means that their jokes don't rest in their cleverness - it comes from their lightness. And all that lightness that makes a fiddle ring would rattle to pieces any notion of the value of being an audience to one who has had the experience of being an instrument.*
>
> *Now, although a fiddle may never be fooled by the folly of human thinking, very much like us, they have pain. Their necks are stiff and their nerves, their strings, are stretched. They feel the friction of the bow and inside their*

beautiful brown little bodies they have only a little stick called a soundpost and an emptiness that seizes every inch of space - top to bottom, side to side. Their emptiness is for them (as it is for us) a nearly unbearable ache - an ache that is fitted to the shape that makes its tone. And sometimes a fiddle is tempted to fill that void with rags or glass or gold, even knowing that, if it should do that, it would never again resonate the intentions of its fiddler. It would never again be alive with his music. It would dull itself to the exquisite heat of the fiddler's will, the deliberate tenderness of his fingers.

And so, they resist. They resist so that they can respond.

Some fiddles have lived without eyes or ears or innards for a couple hundred years. They would die, though, if they were denied a fiddler.

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Virtue Reality

kidbrothers.net/release/julaug94.html

> *Virtues are funny things. They are the fruit of faith and, whenever paraded, become parodies of themselves and the worst kind of vanity imaginable. When they are not the fruit of faith they become its greatest obstacle. Virtues are most vital when invisible and most sharply imaged when they are not the focus of our attentions. They are evidence of their Source (and ours) and not the generators of it (or us).*
>
> *Take, for example, wisdom. Wisdom has at its source the "fear of the Lord" - the highest regard and reverence for Him. The tendency among many of us, though, is to confuse wisdom with omniscience and to think ourselves wise in proportion to how much stuff we know. God calls us to be wise and provides us with Christ. We pressure ourselves to be all-knowing and fret over where Cain got his wife and how the earth can be as young as the scriptures claim when geologists say that it takes millions of years more than that to produce a barrel of oil. We tend to suspect that wisdom lies in the ability to answer imponderables rather than in Christ. And we sometimes end in self-contempt and even abandonment of our faith, not because our faith is false, but because we focused on a wisdom that is not a virtue but a vanity.*
>
> *It is the same way with strength. God calls us to "be strong" and we mistake that for a call to omnipotence. We confuse strength to endure trials with an ability to walk unfrustrated through life. We convince ourselves that if we were strong we would never fail, never tire, never hurt, never need. We being to measure strength in terms of ease of progress, equate power with success, endurability with invincibility and inevitably, when our illusions of omnipotence is shattered, we condemn ourselves for being weak.*
>
> *God has called us to be lovers and we frequently think that He meant us to be saviors. So we "love" as long as we see "results." We give of ourselves as long as our investments pay off, but if the ones we love do not respond, we tend to despair and blame ourselves and even resent those we pretend to love. Because we love someone, we want them to be free of addictions, of sin, of self - and that is as it should be. But it might be that our love for them and our desire for their well-being will not make them well. And, if that*

is the case, their lack of response no more negates the reality of love than their quickness to respond would confirm it.

Love is a virtue and not a feeling. It is fed and fired by God - not by the favorable response of the beloved. Even when it doesn't seem to make a dime's worth of difference to the ones on whom it lavished, it is still the most prized of all virtues because it is at the heart of the very character of God. By loving we participate in His Life and Essence. When we stoop to bait and buy good behavior we are no longer loving as God loves. We are manipulating and cheapening the dignity of the person whom we are called - not to save, not even to change - but to love. If real salvation is possible (and we know it is) it is because real love is there. And love is real, love that is truly a virtue and not just an act - agape love - gushes from God through those who know Him. It is not strung alone by those who don't.

In a world where quantitative values have obscured the reality of qualitative values - where we long to measure progress and chart growth, it is easy to give in to the temptation to judge ourselves and to try to walk by sight. But into that confused and meaningless effort God speaks with His great, still and small voice, with his Christ. He speaks through these invisible virtues with which His people shine and in the light of their lives this desperate, smug world sees not strength, wisdom, or even love, but Him who is the source of these things and the savior of humankind. Let us in whom He dwells look also to Him so we can shine more brightly.

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His Master's Voice

kidbrothers.net/release/sepoct94.html

If I loved my Master like my dog loves his, I would be more saintly than John the Divine ... more radical than John the Baptizer ... more deeply devoted than St. John of the Cross.

My dog, Bear, is a golden retriever with a more-than-weird fear of storms, an uncanny sense of how to be especially gentle around children, epilepsy, and a coat that is wildly wavy and shines gold. He has a look of nobility about him - a goofy kind of nobility - and at nine plus years of age, he still has not grown into his feet (except his head, which is somewhat enormous). He weighs about 75 pounds and eats very little to maintain that weight. He loves to fetch, especially in water. He hates baths and loves to roll in ... how should I say it? ... stuff that smells. He knows sit, down, heel, stay, but doesn't do tricks. I suspect that he is embarrassed for me that I try to show him off.

But the devout part - aside from his obvious charm - that is the part I most envy....

When a storm comes, Bear unashamedly dashes between my legs. If I lock them together, he attaches himself to whichever leg he is closest to. He does not run away in a storm - he runs to me. I don't know if this is about real safety or if it's about mere comfort, but I know that I would do better to crawl between my Master's legs in those times of storm, than to feign courage or break for another and doubtless inferior shelter.

Of all the things I've had to teach Bear, coming to me was never one. I've had to teach him not to sit on the couch, not to climb into my bed, not to sit under the table at dinner - but I've never had to teach him the reverse. When my friends sit with him, if he gets nervous or upset (and he doesn't much) they play an album of mine or give him one of my sweaters to nuzzle. Bear not only loves me, he loves my stuff like I should love God's "stuff" - His church, the Bible, stars, sparrows ... His voice, those things that carry His scent.

Bear takes his medicine (for his epilepsy) well, too. I've never been good at taking medicine. Bear obviously doesn't like it, but he doesn't resist - he's

only slightly uncooperative. And, if I try to sneak it to him in his food, he spits it out. If I give it to him from my hand, he swallows it. I try to avoid medicine from God - even to the point of avoiding God. Bear comes up quietly and sits and opens his mouth for it.

Of course, there is one time when Bear runs from me. It's when I practice the cello, and so, who could blame him - I'd run from me too, if I could. But Bear's master is not as good at playing cello as my Master is. Bear's master squeaks and squawks away at his instrument like my Master never will. I have long since given up the ambition to be as good at everything as my Master is - I do hope that my Master will not give up on making me as good at being mastered as is my dog.

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Invisible Things

kidbrothers.net/release/novdec94.html

> *And there are invisible things. Like the light behind the earth that casts a shadow of it, a shadow we call night ... like the sap that runs with some wildness of life in the veins of trees that we see as dead ... like the impulse behind the act ... like the silence inaudible behind the noise...*
>
> *Like all the beyond - too great to be fit into the lenses of our high-powered telescopes and microscopes, as close to us as the ocean is to fish, too present to be discovered (or even discoverable), a thing of which we are a part and apart from which we cannot be ourselves - invisible things...*
>
> *Things cut off from our senses like Eden was barred from our first ancestors - guarded, hedged in and away, things of the Spirit - angels, the will of God, God Himself, His Kingdom (the place where His Spirit lives and reigns), love ... things we dream of and imagine that we remember, things we parrot and kill in that parroting - things we yearn for and curse and deny and yearn for again in spite of ourselves - as if a part of our true selves belonged to a true world and not the one our lesser selves have settled in and surrendered to ... or would surrender to if not for the persistence of those invisible things...*
>
> *Those things that the visible world hang from, point to, cannot quite reach, cannot quite escape. And just when our smug, agnostic loneliness settles into some comfortable, almost manageable despair, something that goes "bump" in the night or "whir" in our hearts sweeps us up out of the numbness and into that longing, that anger, that unquenchable hope that we would just as well live without, if only life was possible without it...*
>
> *If only life was not part of those invisible things - winds moving leaves, temperatures that we can measure, that affect the world, pasts, futures ... invisible things.*
>
> *He is the image of the invisible God. He is incomprehensible to our western minds - as He was to eastern ones. He came from that beyond that no human mind as visited. When we try to squeeze Him into our systems of thought, He vanishes - He slips through our grasp and then reappears and (in so many words) says, "No man takes My life from Me. No man forces*

his will on Me. I am not yours to handle and cheapen. You are Mine to love and make holy."

In Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells. In Him all things are held together. In Him we see what love is - that it originates in God and is energized by Him.

And so, we thank God for all we see. For beauty and for the miracle of sight, for music and wonder of hearing, for warmth and the sense of touch. But we thank Him more for Christ, without whom we would be deaf, insensitive and blind to the invisible things, and there are ... invisible things...

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For Children Only

kidbrothers.net/release/janfeb95.html

The woman on the television had that smug-uppity look on her face and that grimly condescending tone in her voice when she looked dead on into the camera and at point blank range announced with ridiculous earnest something that was hysterically, ironically true:

"Miracles are for children," she said with her educated, wilted monotone - a delivery you might call deadpan if she was trying to be funny. The funny thing is, she was not.

But she was right - miracles are for children. And the truth that popped out from between those lips that sophistication had soured, seemed to stop short of the heart of its intended target, look back in wonder, and scratch its head at the unflattering set of jaws whose bite it had accidentally escaped. That truth could have been no sweeter or more true if it had been spoken by Christ Himself.

And Christ Himself did say much the same in so many words, especially if we take the idea of miracle at its most exact sense: "the suspension of the laws of nature by divine intervention." Christ preached what He Himself called the "Good News" of the kingdom of God - a kingdom full of miracles. He Himself said that in this Kingdom the poor would know comfort - and even the most debauched hedonists among us know that if comfort is found by anyone, it is a miracle. In this kingdom of miraculous comfort, Christ said that the meek would inherit the earth (quite contrary to the law of survival of the fittest), the hungry would be satisfied (not a popular notion in a consumerist society), the pure would have vision (a threat to a world that thrives on sensationalism) and the peacemakers (not the most heavily armed aggressors) would be esteemed.

The TV lady and Jesus were in complete agreement about miracles being for children. But then the TV woman said that grown-up people, grown up societies, do not need miracles. She said that the grown-up meanings that Jesus meant did not need the theatrical trappings that He dressed them in - those circus costume miracles (those funny, childish gags like the calming of storms, the cleansing of lepers, the raising from the dead). She said we

did not need miracles to find Christ or to be part of His kingdom.

Therein is the rub. Christ said that His kingdom - the world where He Himself reigns - is for children. He Himself said that if we don't need a miracle we will most likely have little interest in Him. If we are able to get along joyfully in the grown-up world of supply, demand, survival, aggression, sensations and consumerism, then we'd probably have too low to stoop and too much trimming to do to slip through that needle's eye gateway to Him. If we aren't sick, we don't need a doctor. If we aren't lost, we don't need a leader.

But, if we can admit a need, if we aren't as altogether as we sometimes secretly fear we're not, if we can shed our thick-skinned self-reliance and peel off that thin veneer of satisfaction - then there is a place for us in His kingdom and a fairly fat chance that we can loosen our load and slip on through. If we can find that courage... or that honesty... if we can be needy, helpless, blessed as a child...

O Lord, this is me calling - an adult in an adult world, needing to be a child again in a kingdom for children. O Lord - can you make me that? It will take a miracle.

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Play It Again

kidbrothers.net/release/marapr95.html

My grandparents all repeated themselves a lot. Every ten minutes or so their conversations would circle and start again, word for word. As they got older an ever broadening range of suggestions became cues for an ever narrowing range of responses: "Yes, well, did I ever tell you about that big storm we had in '39? ...Do you have your driver's license already? ...When did you graduate from high school? ...Why is it you haven't married yet? ...We had a whopper rain back in...."

So, you can probably imagine how disturbing it was to me when, after writing a column for this issue of RELEASE - after sprucing and polishing it to a fine shine and faxing it - I realized that it was a nearly exact duplicate of an article I wrote back in '93, just before "that big storm" I probably mentioned already (or have I?). Anyway, suddenly everything I thought about saying sounded weirdly like the echo of what I had already said. This, of course, would not be so worrisome to a person with a quieter disposition or even to someone who had any gift other than the "gift of gab." And, granted, imitation is a form of flattery, but that's only true if someone else is imitating you. If you imitate yourself, you just sound conceited. Or old.

Now, I am not so naive as to imagine that people have not spotted some conceit in me. I know it's there and that I am not humble enough to extinguish it or clever enough to disguise it. A person can overcome conceit though, through prayer and service and devotion. But no amount of fasting or Bible memorizing or church attending will hold sway over aging. If we live long enough, we will get old. And as we get older we will more and more repeat ourselves, as I have already begun to do. Repeatedly.

Not that I am a card-carrying member of the youth cult. I was awful at being young. My adolescence was riddled with that angst-ridden morbidity that seethes with crushes, complexes and bad poetry. The "twenties" were the March of my life - in like a lion, out like a lamb. They were predictably turbulent early on and dissolved into quiet desperation just before passing. At 30 I was relieved of the responsibility to be "young and foolish" - I was not yet old and I was not still young. And God, who is good through all

ages, had landed me at last in a place of relative peace and even prosperity.

Of course, just as I wasted my youth by being too goofy, I blemished the high noon of my life by becoming a bit (this is so embarrassing), conceited. It's normal, I guess, but embarrassing nonetheless. And so, God, being good still, is doing what He does, doing what I can't do and undoing what I have done.

God lets us struggle and lets us prosper - we don't all struggle and prosper the same, but we all do both to some degree. And when we have done enough to think more highly of ourselves than we should, God lets us age. And as we age we begin to forget stuff, our joints stiffen, our heads go a little soft. We drive slower and are less driven; are more embarrassed but less likely to die of that embarrassment and more likely to die of natural causes. Getting old is part of getting past whatever illusion we have about ourselves. It is part of getting free - free from reasonable doubts, irrational conceits, false securities, displaced affections...

And so, let me grow. Let me grow old. Let me grow free. Even if I have to repeat myself to do it.

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Pictures in the Sky

kidbrothers.net/release/mayjun95.html

There are those skies - skies stretched so tight you just know they're about to pop - skies in whose seamless blue reaches you hear the snap of sails full of wind, sails moving ships like these skies move you, like these skies move oceans, worlds, time ... skies stretched tight like balloons at birthday parties, full of breath, light like helium, so light you have to tie them down.

There are skies like that. Skies so light they look like they could easily be lifted away, so light they seem almost to lift you, to suck you out of the grip of gravity.

But it is the sun they lift, these skies - skies into whose perfectly arched and balanced heads any sun would rise and find room therein to shine. These skies stay poised, enormously gentle, like giants across whom children and crawl and play - giants who are strong enough to feel the touch of these little ones and not move one muscle to risk unbalancing or frightening them.

There are skies like that. You have to look up to see them. You cannot find them beneath you or within you. They are "out" there...they are "up" there.

There are these skies.

Skies stretched so tight you just know you're about to pop standing beneath them. Your lungs may burst from breathing their sizable air - air from their cool heights so tall they scrape the footings of heaven - skies so pure and strong that God built His New Jerusalem on their back. And they reach up toward that Holy City like Romeo scaling the forbidden wall beneath Juliet - skies that go endlessly, nearly forever with the beauty of her face, the quiet, unshaken gaze of her eyes, skies alive with all the virility and tenderness of young love - skies as ancient as time, as innocent as babies held in the Hands of Eternity.

And I was trying to think of how I could encourage you - of what I could say to spur you on, just trying to come up with something. And then I was overcome.

And you might say, "but it's just a sky" - but you could say that only if you'd never seen it. And you might say, "Oh, the sky is just a metaphor and he's really overcome by something spiritual, like, say, the love of God." But if the sky is only a metaphor, it is God's metaphor, and if you'd look up - if you'd just look up...well, I haven't the words, but...

There are those skies - skies stretched so tight you just know they're about to pop...

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The Sound and the Worry

kidbrothers.net/release/julaug95.html

We are surrounded by - we are dependent on (and weirdly, quite even indebted to) a hundred million things that are just beyond our reach and completely beyond our control. Things like favorable weather; the honesty and good intentions of those people among and with whom we live, work and play; balanced budgets; tomorrow and tomorrow in its creeping, petty pace; our next paycheck; dependable machinery; our next breath.

A hundred million things. All of them are just as real as they are invisible, just as available as they are necessary, just as likely to fall on the just as on the unjust, as apt to shine on those who worry as on those who hope. (The difference being that those who worry are less able to enjoy things than those who hope.) But for all of us, we are surrounded by things we cannot predict, control, possess or avoid - things that press us and compete for control - a competition that must be decidedly won by "faith" or we will be lost.

It is easy in the frantic, task-driven "day-to-day" for us to lose our "centers" - our souls - our sense of who we are and what is really important. We are haunted by the ghosts of the "what if's" who live in the shadows of the "if only's." They accuse us, torment us, tempt us to abandon the freedom we have in Christ.

But, if we still ourselves, if we let Him calm us, focus us, equip us for the day, He will remind us of our Father's prodigal generosity and about the pitiful weakness of greedy men. He will remind us (as He reminded the devil) that "Man does not live by bread alone," though He may call us (as He called His first disciples) to give bread to the hungry (presumably because man cannot live long without bread). He will remind us about the cares that burden common people, the illusions that blind those the world calls "lucky," and the crippling effects of worry. Then He will give us hope- hope that stretches us (where worry bent us) and faith - faith that sustains us (where greed smothered us) and love - love that is at the bottom of our deepest desires, the loss of which is at the root of all our fears.

The other night I dreamt that I was stuck in an airport terminal - another

canceled flight; another long, anxious wait. The place was packed with stranded passengers and misplaced luggage, and I sank into a chair by the phone booths, waiting for the oxygen masks to drop out of the ceilings (it was a dream, remember). Suddenly, I noticed this distressed man, sobbing, pulling his hair out by the handfuls, and so I leaned over to ask him what was the matter and if I could help.

"What's wrong, sir?" I asked. He grabbed yet another handful of his hair and sobbed, "I'm afraid I'm going bald!" And so it goes. We are surrounded by a million possibilities, all of which remind us that we are not the "captains of our own fates." As we face these possibilities, let's remember who our captain is. Let us not be made captives of worry.

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The Divine Obsession

kidbrothers.net/release/sepoct95.html

> *"Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm;*
> *For love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave.*
> *It burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame.*
> *Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.*
> *If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love,*
> *It would be utterly scorned."*

Song of Songs 8:6-7 NIV

It is said that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, and it is often guessed that he wrote those lines - not that it would take a great genius to come up with them, but, given our 20th century fears and insecurities about love, all of our ridiculous attempts to achieve and/or sustain it, it is a wise person who knows the beauty, the power, and the value of a thing that cannot be bought and cannot be extinguished. These few, simple lines outweigh the volumes of magazines, manuals and marital aids that tell us that love is weak, fickle and manipulable, that tell us that love is something we generate, something that looks very much like us. We are weak, fickle and manipulable - love is not. Love is something God generates - it looks very much like Him.

But what does God look like?

Back in the 70's when it became "cool" for Christians to read and write books about sex, I read (of course) several such books. One of those books dismissed the medieval notion that Song of Songs was allegorical. It suggested that since Thomas Aquinas and Bernard of Clairveau, etc., were not "cool" enough to have been living in the 1970's and since they were celibates (and certainly celibacy is uncool and unsexy), they were naturally too hung up to see that Song of Songs was obviously merely an erotic poem. Now that sex was okay for Christians, we could finally admit that

inflamed love, impassioned love, "erotic love" was the subject of Solomon's wonderful work. Godly love, "agape love" was okay too - but it was stable, rational, intellectual and obligatory.

But now I wonder.

Could it be that God "feels"? Could God be capable of passion? Could God be excited or must He be austere? Are we comfortable with the image of God as Father and nervous about God as Lover (some of us even prefer God as Parent - less a personality, more an ideal). Are we happy to have God be the Creator, but scared to think of him as being Creative? Do we like God being an engineer, but balk at his being an artist? Does his being a logician comfort us, but His being a poet threaten us? Do we enjoy the glow of God's light but shade ourselves from the heat of his flames? Does the idea that Jesus tolerated the sinful woman's anointing of His feet and John resting his head on Jesus' breast make us squirm, so the thought that Jesus enjoyed this makes us sick? How is it that we can accept that Moses saw a bush that burned and was not consumed, yet we doubt that God can love in a rage and never cool?

Could it be time to reread the Song of Songs, to rethink our images of God, to experience again the love of God? I think it must be. I hope it's not too late.

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Where Mercy Leads

kidbrothers.net/release/sepoct95art.html

Phil Newman

> ***When everything that could be shaken was shaken, Rich Mullins ended up straddling the New Mexico border, quotin' Deuteronomy to the Navajos.***

Folks who've heard even a sampling of Rich Mullins' music know he likes to sing about places - from the tall trees down at Johnson's Creek, to the winter wheat of Ireland, to the moonlight spilling them cold Dakota hills.

Rich's affinity for describing his surroundings in song springs from numerous travels and an ability to let his senses lead him to the next poignant lyric. Come to think of it, he says, spending time at "home" - which was Wichita, Kansas, until a few months ago, when he loaded up the truck and moved to New Mexico - feels like being on vacation.

"Wichita was more like a home," he admits, "but I think that's because I was in college, and you never assume that you're gonna live in the same town that you go to college in. Someone told me, 'You seem to have this real sense of detachment.' It's just that I don't get the opportunity to get very attached. But I'm really affected by wherever I'm at."

One summer Sunday, we caught up with Rich in a place that definitely has affected him, a place he doesn't get to visit as much as he once did: Bethel Methodist Church, a weathered clapboard structure not far from Johnson's Creek and just down the road from the house Rich still owns in Bellsburg, Tennessee, 30 miles outside Nashville.

The sanctuary holds almost sacred significance for Rich. Over the years, the author of 'Sing Your Praise To The Lord' and 'Awesome God' has walked to the church alone to craft songs at its piano or to rest in its rickety

wooden pews and silently reflect on life.

On this particular afternoon, however, the old worship house and its yard were filled with the voices of friends gathered to celebrate tow beginnings: the birth a year earlier of Aidan Strasser, the son of Rich's longtime friend and co-writer, Beaker; and the hatching of a new chapter in Rich's own life. After years of dreaming and planning, he had earned his music-education degree from Friends University in May and had relocated to a tiny town on the Navajo reservation in New Mexico where he plans to teach music to Native American children.

Among the revelers assembled in Bellsburg that day were three members of Rich's Ragamuffin band - Phil Madeira, Lee Lundgren, and Mark Robertson - and one of Rich's newer pals, Mark Lowry, who cracked everyone up without saying a word simply by puttering up on his road-hoggin', bad-boy motorscooter.

Another purpose of the party was to toast the upcoming release of Rich's latest album, Brother's Keeper, the Indiana-bred crooner's first "self-produced" effort. (He got help from 'muffins Jimmy A., Rick Elias, Aaron Smith, Madeira, and Lundgren.) Rich and band, along with fellow Reunion artists Ashley Cleveland and Carolyn Arends, will hit the road this fall for a 65-stop tour.

As the sun began to set, a few party-goers got misty-eyed talking about their friend Rich moving even farther away from his old Nashville stomping grounds. Rich, on the other hand, seemed largely unaffected, chowing gleefully on barbecue and birthday cake and engaging in a spirited theological discussion with Mr. Lowry. (They eventually called a truce and went for a spin together on the Markmobile.)

"Every time I go back to my old house in Bellsburg, I really wish I could go there for a week," Rich did acknowledge later, "because there are so many people I'd just like to sit down with and say 'hi' to.

"At the same time, I think I am a little peculiar in that I never miss people until a week before I'm going to see them. Friends will say they're coming out to visit, and I'll say, 'Cool.' As the time approaches, I get anxious to see them, and when they finally get there I'm excited."

His east-of-the-Mississippi friends will have to work at it a bit more, but you

can bet they'll find ways to visit Rich in his new locale. The motivation for his move, he says, was a desire to extend the love of Christ to a culture outside mainstream America. "Growing up as a kid I had a real romantic fascination with Indians," he says, "but for me the things is, here's a culture that is right here. It would be much harder for me at this time to move to Asia. So I can have that kind of experience without having to leave the United States."

Native Americans have been "largely overlooked by the church," he contends. "Although there have been a lot of mission efforts on the reservation, I think the concern was more to civilize them than to Christianize them. The idea was to get them to live in square house and wear ties and conform to a cultural bias rather than a revealed truth."

In his new role, Rich considers himself to be joining God's established work. "I generally think that anyone who thinks they're doing something for God is probably delusional," he says with characteristic candor. "If I want to do God a favor, I should just live as fully as I can, and allow Him to enjoy the gift that He's given me."

There's another, more personal reason for Rich's move. It also explains why he decided to return to college in his mid-30s. And it's one of the reasons he chose to self-produce Brother's Keeper rather than collaborate with his longtime producer, Reed Arvin.

Rich says he is begging God to stretch him beyond his boundaries, be they musical, spiritual, or cultural. "You come back to saying, 'What is essential Christianity? What does faithfulness to Christ really involve? When does it require me to set aside my biases, and when does it require me to stand by them?'"

As Rich recalls, he began laying the groundwork for his move to the Navajo reservation when he recorded Winds of Heaven ... Stuff of Earth back in 1988, which was about the time he started hungering to share God's love with other cultures. He admits that the future of his recording career is undetermined. "We've done six albums since I really started wanting to get involved in mission work. And music has given me the opportunity to prepare myself to do that. I was able to go back to school, which a lot of people my age wouldn't have been able to do."

Still, lest anyone fret that Rich might stop waxing poetic about all the

pictures he sees in the sky and on the earth, the creative juices continue to flow in his new southwestern home. "I've already been inspired," he says thoughtfully. "It's a very inspiring place."

Even if the cactuses don't grow as tall as the trees down at Johnson's Creek.

Rich's Mullings

Hide his opinions under a bushel? No! The Richmeister has given us lots of quotable quips over the years, from the personal ("Being single's great, except between about 10 and 2 every night") to the political ("Clinton's no more a clown than anyone else who's ever been in there") to the ponderable ("We are the temple of God; it's about people, not buildings"). Here he goes again:

***On his 65-stop fall tour with Ashley Cleveland and Carolyn Arends**: "I'm excited about the tour for maybe three reasons. One, I love the music on the album, and of course we'll be doing a lot of that music. Two, I have a blast with the Ragamuffins. Three, you write these songs because of people, and when you get to play then live, you get to have contact with people, the big motivation behind why you're doing what you're doing."*

***On why he still sings about God's mercy so much**: "I just think I believe it more deeply now than ever before. I have days when I go, 'I'm lucky to be alive.'"*

***On his spartan lifestyle (he's currently living in a trailer)**: "My experiences with things have always been disappointing. Nothing has ever been worth what it cost. It doesn't mean I never buy anything, it just means I recognize at the outset that this is a bad investment." He grins. "I do like my jeep an awful lot."*

***On the Ragamuffins**: "I wanted to be part of a band. Growing up I was excluded so much, 'cause I was never an athlete, so I think sometimes I overcompensate now. It's fun to be an accepted part of a team that's making a contribution."*

***On living single in a sex-obsessed society**: "I think the big reason why a*

lot of people become sexually active is because they think they're gonna get something besides just sex out of it. And the reality is all you do get is just sex. And you think, "Oh, this will make someone really love me ... if I remain pure I might lose my boyfriend or my girlfriend." Well the deal is, you might lose them anyway. When you compromise your faith, when you disobey what is clearly lined up for us in terms of values, you have compromised who you are."

***On his disillusionment with politics**: "You cannot change people by changing their laws. Like Plato said, 'Let me make their music and I don't care who makes their laws.' Music is more powerful than legislation."*

***On his secret desire to perform at the White House**: "I've sometimes thought, "Am I such an egomaniac that I would actually go there and play for on of these guys?" And I'm sure I would. But I also think that it would be really wrong. But of all the wrong things I've done I'm not sure it would be any worse that any of the others."*

***On the human tendency to debate everything**: "I don't know how to have an opinion without being passionately about it, even if it's just an opinion I assume for the sake of argument. I find that the people I don't really care that much about I argue with, and the people I really love, I pray for. So I think if I would pray more and argue less, I would have done better."*

***On the difference between Generation X's and his own Baby Boomer generation's attitudes towards pop culture**: "Rather than trying to get their identity entirely from a pop movement, X'ers enjoy it, exploit it, they get out of it exactly what they pay for, and then they leave it alone. I think when I was kid, we really believed that pop culture was going to have some kind of enduring legacy. And it does: We've got AIDS now."*

***On his healthy appetite**: "After two hours of dead silence in the jeep, (Rich's pal) Mitch looks over and goes, 'Do you think you could eat a 72-ounce steak in an hour?' I go, 'Sure, I could eat a 72-ounce steak in about 20 minutes.'"*

He's not kidding - we've seen Rich eat. - P.N.

This One's a Keeper, Brother

Over lunch at Mulligan's in downtown Nashville, Rich ruminates on his latest project, song by song.

"Brother's Keeper"

When he and Beaker wrote it, Rich was staying with author James Bryan Smith and Smith's wife, Megan. Jim was working on a book called Embracing the Love of God," Rich recalls, "and so a lot of our conversations were about how you allow yourself to experience God's love and how you love someone the same way." As for one of the song's most thoughtful lyrics - "I won't despise him for his weakness, I won't regard him for his strength" - Rich reflects: "It's easy to accept that we shouldn't be dismissive of people because of their faults, but it's harder to not be inclusive of people because they're attractive. What's wrong with regarding someone's strength? The strength is not the issue, the person is the issue."

"Let Mercy Lead"

That cooing at the beginning is indeed Aidan, Beaker's son, to whom the song is addressed. (The tyke turned 1 in June.) As Rich tells it, "we were sitting around and we said, 'Hey, let's write a song for Aidan.' We started it before he was even born. And Beaker said, 'I want to write a song for him that will take him through life.' I wish we could have the same intensity about everything we write, because we spent months and months discarding really cool ideas. Beaker is not entirely satisfied with the song. But fortunately he's gonna be around to tell Aidan other things."

"Hatching of a Heart"

"The motivation was just that I had this real dreamy piano riff ... I stole the title from Thomas Morton ... It's like this book I'm reading now, Soul Making, by Alan Jones. One of things I've become interested in is: What is a soul? Does it grow, does it pre-exist us? The Bible doesn't really talk a whole lot about it. It's the whole 'born again' thing. My own experience is there in the song."

"Promenade"

The song tells of a policeman who intends to quiet a group of revelers, but who encounters so much joy that he ends up joining the celebration. "We try to make Christianity attractive," says Rich. "And that's like saying I'm

going to make the Rockies attractive. How are you going to do that? By letting them be what they are. I think nothing is more compelling than to see people who have the Spirit living in the Spirit, and not trying to advertise, just being what they are."

"Wounds of Love"

"I think everyone who allows themselves to honestly be loved is going to be wounded," muses Rich. "Your life is a gift, and out of gratitude to God you should go out there and live. And when it's all over you're gonna be pretty wounded. And I hope that you're hurt because people have loved you, not because they used you."

"Damascus Road"

Rich sings that he was "hung in the ropes of success" until God "stripped away the mask of life they had placed upon the face of death." Why that image? "That's one of the miracles of Christ - the blind can see," he says. "There are times in your life that I believe God powerfully gives you vision, and you say, 'Oh my gosh, that is not what I thought. I fact, that is the exact opposite of what I thought.'"

"Eli's Song"

The album's second baby-inspired song was co-written by Rich, fellow Ragamuffin Lee Lundgren, and Lundgren's wife Nikki, for the couples newborn daughter, Eliza. "I had written this dulcimer thing that I really liked," Rich recalls. "Nikki had said the dulcimer melody sounded kind of rough and kind of delicate, like a cowgirl and a ballerina at the same time. We put that together with a leaf to make it a three-part image." The added the rocking of Eliza's cradle to fade out the tune.

"Cry the Name"

Oops. The hard-boiled, artery-clogging Scottish eggs had just arrived, and we got so caught up that I forgot to ask Rich about this song. It's great, though. Listen for yourself. But first, pass the pepper.

"The Breaks"

One of this song's lines - "I do not know yet what I am made of, or all I may someday be" - mirrors a lyric from "Creed" on Rich's last album: "I did not

make it, no it is making me." Rich attributes both thoughts to one of his favorite authors, G.K. Chesterson. "It's kind of like the apostle Paul's thing about losing your life to find it," says Rich. "Growing up in the 60's and 70's, people said 'I'm going out to find myself.' And its (chuckle) sort of silly. My parents would say, 'How did they lose themselves?' ... And so in the process of living, and trying to be faithful to Christ but not doctrinally narrow, I'm asking that if I were to hold on to Christ, what would that be, and what would that not be? And in light of that, let me let go, oh God, in your mercy, of everything that is not you."

"Quotin' Deuteronomy to the Devil"

This folk-rockish tune came to be as Rich and Beaker were "just sitting around one day" in Rich's Wichita pad. "It was sort of a joke, actually," says Rich. "as much as I am sometimes skeptical about those preachers that yell at you all the time - like in real life, if a preacher yells at me I just leave - if you cartoon it, then I think it's interesting."

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The Big 4-Oh

kidbrothers.net/release/novdec95.html

By the time you get this issue of RELEASE and read (if you do read) this little essay of mine, I will have celebrated my fortieth birthday. In my mid to late twenties I had some romantic, highly exaggerated notions about an early death - taking off at 33 - joining the company of Mozart, Foster, Jesus and other immortals who checked out in their early thirties. But this was a party I didn't get an invitation to - a gang I didn't belong in (me not being a genius and all). So, in Chicago I had my own party - celebrating the fun of being alive as opposed to the mystique of having an untimely death.

Because it's better to be alive than to be dead - that's for sure. And believe it or not - there are certain advantages in being 40 over being 18. Of course, there are certain disadvantages too, but - in keeping with the spirit of the 90's, I don't mind viewing those "disadvantages" as "challenges." Paul, I think had the perfect take on the pluses and minuses of life and death - "to live is Christ, to die is gain," so, that having been settled, I have made out a list of credits and debits about being younger and older - an issue that didn't seem as large or confused in the first century as it does at the end of the 20th:

At 18, if you have oversized aspirations, the whole world sees you as a dreamer. At 40, you get a reputation for being a visionary.

At 18, if you've thrown in the towel, you're called a loser. At 40, you're called down-to-earth, a realist.

At 18, if you play in the rain or howl at the moon, if you paint or invent or compose songs or poems, you're accused of being childish. At 40, you are praised for being childlike.

At 18, time fits you like a pair of pants big enough to swim in. At 40, time fits so tight you can't button it's collar.

At 18, your sails are full. At 40, your rudder runs deep.

At 18, people misjudge your character flaws as being mere bad habits that they might change. At 40, people misjudge every bad habit as being the

mark of weak character and they either dismiss you as being a lesson in reprobation or just accept you as a friend. Anyway, you graduate from being a missionary project into being either a lost cause or one of the gang.

At 18, no one knows as much as you. At 40, you begin to understand the wisdom of Solomon in his saying:

"Do not be overrighteous, neither be overwise - why destroy yourself? Do not be overwicked and do not be a fool - why die before your time? It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes." - Ecclesiastes 7:16-18.

So, stay alive. "A living dog is better than a dead lion" - and HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OF YOU FROM ME.

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Joking Matters

kidbrothers.net/release/janfeb96.html

The only thing worse than a joke you don't get is the explanation that is bound to follow. The explanation that, while it may help you see why you should have seen the humor that you so lamely missed, is little likely to make you laugh. It may provoke you to muster a sympathy snicker so as to avoid more of an already tedious and misdirected lecture. It may inspire a mild giggle of recognition, but it will hardly ever raise a real belly-laugh, which was the original desired effect.

And so, here I go, me and the thousand other people, trying to explain a joke that we would do better to learn to better tell. I am setting out to explain again why Jesus is the only true hope for the world, why we should put our faith in Him and what all of that means. I am collecting the information, selecting from what I hope will be useable as evidence, arranging my findings into arguments, framing it for presentation and recognizing that, while it may all be fine as far as it goes, it doesn't go far enough.

Then I remembered two things. The first thing I recall is an argument I once had with a friend. After I had whacked away his last scrap of defense, after I had successfully cut off every possible escape route that he could use, after I had backed him into an inescapable corner and hit him with a great inarguable truth, he blew me away by simply saying, "I do not want to be a Christian. I don't want your Jesus Christ." There was no argument left to be had or won. Faith is a matter of the will as much as it is of the intellect. I wanted to believe in Jesus. My friend wanted to believe in himself. In spite of how convincing my reason was, my reason was not compelling.

So, the second thing I remember is this: I am a Christian because I have seen the love of God lived out in the lives of people who know Him. The Word has become flesh and I have encountered God in the people who have manifested (in many "unreasonable" ways) His presence - a presence that is more than convincing - it is a presence that is compelling. I am a Christian, not because someone explained the nuts and bolts of

Christianity to me, but because there were people who were willing to be nuts and bolts. Through their obedience to the truth and not necessarily through their explanation of it, they held it together so that I could experience it and be compelled to obey. "If I be lifted up," Jesus said, "I will draw all men unto me."

So, here I offer what is possibly the worst thing that can be offered: an explanation of a joke. And, what makes this more inexcusable than the fact that this is that, is the added fact that this is an explanation to a joke you've already gotten. I offer it anyway. I offer it in the hope that it might somehow encourage you to live out your lives, and, by living, tell the same joke. Love one another. Forgive one another. Work as unto God. Let the peace of Christ reign in your hearts. Make it your ambition to lead quiet lives. Obey. Greet one another with a holy kiss. No one will argue with that.

Much that I have read has challenged my opinion and hardened my convictions - I am thankful for it. It is for you (and for me, more in living that in writing) to let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

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Never Alone

kidbrothers.net/release/marapr96.html

> *"No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."*
>
> *This phrase - both troublesome and comforting, yet beautiful for the power of its straightforward witness of truth - is attributed to John Donne. He may have been quoting someone else when he penned it and made this wording permanent, but even if he didn't get the words from someone else, the ideas are certainly implicit in Paul's letters and John's gospel. Wherever it originated, this famous line has had an enduring impact on western civilization - our political philosophies, our theology, our arts, commerce, and culture.*
>
> *So, what is hard to understand then is this: If we are not islands, why do we feel so alone? If we are "part of the main," why are we so often in a condition of isolation? Why is it that in spite of - or sometimes, more tragically, because of - our most gut-wrenching efforts to experience a sense of belonging and to participate in the sharing of camaraderie or friendship or love, we experience a deep, disturbing alienation? The sense of aloneness permeates our existence. Sometimes it subtly, almost imperceptibly crouches in the shadows - sometimes it dominates, ruthlessly marching like Sherman across every front of our lives.*
>
> *Why?*
>
> *Or more important (and more disturbing), why would any answer to this question give us little or no consolation? Why does "knowing why" offer so little relief? Why is that we were created with a need for explanations that pales beside our need for belonging? Why are all the answers - so easy to get, to give, to figure out or make up - so unsatisfying, and our need for intimacy - so hard to give , to find, to share, so impossible to take - so necessary for a satisfying life?*
>
> *I cannot answer this. What I do know is that, feel it or not - no man is an island, we are not alone. My failures, my successes, my strengths and weaknesses reach beyond me - they affect people around me. Whether or not I feel close, my life - every life - touches other lives. We are joined in a*

responsibility to together make this world a good one for all of us. Each of us warms the world or chills it inasmuch as we offer or withhold respect, hospitality, encouragement, love, or truth. In that sense we are all parts of each other's well-being or sickness, and we affect the climate that we all share.

But we are also alone. "Each heart knows its own bitterness, and none else can share its joy." (Proverbs 14:10) We each have some identity that is separate (and that separates us) from the community. We are individuals, unique in ourselves. We are responsible for our choices, capable of amazing creativity, loved by the God who made us and wrote our names - not the names given us by others, but the names given us by our Creator - on a white stone to be given on the other side. (Revelation 2: 17)

So, let us love one another, enjoy each other's company, share in the common work, endure each other's failures. This will not cure our aloneness, so let's not ask that of each other. Let's learn to not be afraid of a very necessary aloneness. With others and without them we are at home. In both their company and our solitude we will meet God.

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Momentary Pleasures

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Once in a while - just every once in a great while - you have one of those moments. They are those moments that come one at a time, with no interruptions, no competitions, no phone ringing or beeping, no kids screaming for attention, no emergencies, no jamming of the lines, no log pile of ideas...

So you fold that last piece of laundry, you nail down that last plank. You lay that last brick and wash off your trowel with your fullest attention, aware of your deepest joy. You sharpen your lawn mower blade and savor the motion and sound of the file sliding roughly and at just the right angle along the cutting edge. You toss one extra pass of your football with your kid or your dad or your friend, you fine tune your guitar, you reread that last couple of pages of your favorite book, you measure out and keep the safe space between you and the car ahead...

Not often, but every one in a while you have that perfect kind of moment when you put everything you've got into a task and find you have enough, and you feel that, even if you bungle the job, there is little at stake. You sink your teeth into something, put your heart into it, act deliberately, by choice - not by coercion of immediate necessity. You mean what you do as if there was no meaning at all in everything else - you do it for the joy of doing, not just to get it done. You shoot from the hip, swing from your shoulders, and feel that exhilarating grace and balance of having found your center, or having centered yourself.

It is for those every-once-in-a-while kind of moments - far more than for those once-upon-a-time ones - that we can be most thankful. It is in those moments that we find some sense of who we are. Regardless of how grand or how common the event of the moment is, in it we see ourselves at our absolute best - focused, poised and pure - no compromise, no ulterior motives, no self deception or pretense. We see what we are like when we have no point to prove or score, no bills to fit, no scrutinizing to endure... We meet again that child in us who stills loves to swim naked in the cold, quick-running waters of the now - the child in us who can feel in his skin and very bones the warmth and brilliance of the sun. In those moments

there is that flash of astonishing recognition: this is not a child who is merely in us - this child is us.

No wonder we love the moments and want them to linger. But for now they can't, so we must let them go. They are the flicker of some holy flame, a twinkling of an eye wherein the dead come alive again. Remember them, thank the Lord for them, but move on into the next moment and be present in it. It is God's present to you.

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Growing Still

kidbrothers.net/release/julaug96.html

" *Moses grew and became a man. He visited his people and saw*..."

Exodus 2:11, besides being part of the great account of God delivering Israel out of its bondage in Egypt, gives us a few little glimpses into the character of Moses, the meaning of maturing and those microscopic miracles that play into the Cecil B. DeMille ones.

" *Moses grew*..." It is so nearly cliche that you hate to say it, but Moses did not come out of the womb, nor was he drawn out of the river, equipped to fulfill God's plan for him. Moses *grew*. This may be the best thing that can be said about any of us - not that we " have become" - but that we are continually " becoming." Growth is a sign of life, and if Jesus said that He came that we might have it, it must be good.

Moses' growth did not happen as we might wish: after " becoming a man," he was still seized with rage, fear, and all those things we'd rather outgrow. These flaws along the way make it difficult to measure growth, and that difficulty makes it tempting to give up. But to give up - to refuse to grow - is to die. That's maybe why Christ said not to judge.

" ...*and became a man. He visited his people*..." The mature person is one who is ready to see himself in a context bigger than himself. Many of us want to imagine that we need to find ourselves - a notion that may be true in a limited sort of way. Many of us think that we must define or invent ourselves - possibly equally true but in an even more limited way.

When Moses visited his people he was beginning to accept himself, not just as an Egyptian prince, but as the heir to something far greater, far grander than a crown. He was beginning to accept himself as being part of a people (in his case, a " chosen people"). The identity given him by the palace occupants could never give him what everyone needs - a sense of who we are. As a man, maybe he had outgrown his reputation and become restless among peers. So, he visited his people and began to know himself.

" ...*and saw*..." In Carl Sandburg's *Rootabaga Stories*, the Potato Face Blind Man plays an accordion and wears a sign that says " I'm blind too." Most of us have trouble seeing. Clear vision is blocked by ungrounded expectations (both the fearful kind and the grandiose kind), by narrowness, and by a lack of faith. When Moses " saw," he had come to a place where he was able to set aside his willfully constructed world and enter the one that existed independently of his wishes. What he saw in Egypt would be stretched by what he would come to see in Midian, but here was the beginning of what would end with his view of the promised land.

And so, I hope you too will grow, though you - like Moses and me and everyone I know - may have flaws. I hope that you as a part of a chosen people know who you are beyond who your peers suspect you to be. And I hope you see, that you recognize suffering and that you someday see the salvation for which we wait.

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The Communion of Saints

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> *In one of those especially poignant passages that so frequently and powerfully mark the gospels and charge them with the character of Christ, we encounter Jesus and His twelve in a moment of deep sorrow followed by a great flash of glory. (And does glory ever come except on the heels of sorrow?)*
>
> *Jesus has just alienated many of His disciples by telling them that they must "eat (His) body" and "drink (His) blood." This directive must have been even more startling to its original audience than to us. They did not hear it through the filter of some 1900 of systematizing theology contrived to intellectualize and cushion us against the blow of His outrageous command. They it head on and felt the full force of it and they were repulsed.*
>
> *Here, Jesus, who was habitually pushing the margin of reason into the realms of faith, crossed the line. Here, He ventured too deeply into the uncharted territory of the kingdom of God, articulated too clearly the good, yet disturbing news of that kingdom, and called for an obedience too radically opposite the reasonable sensibilities of many disciples at that time. He called them to follow too far outside their well-defined comfort lines...and they ran away in disgust or stood paralyzed in terror as Jesus walked on - walked on into the blinding light of the liberating truth He had just spoken.*
>
> *The twelve stayed with Him - maybe reluctantly, maybe for reasons that they didn't know. But when Jesus asked that heartbreaking question, "Will you also leave Me?" it is Peter - the impetuous apostle - who gives us the secret to the hidden heart of discipleship:*
>
> *"Where else can we go? You have the words of life!"*
>
> *Peter may very well have been as perplexed over the point of Jesus' teaching as those who abandoned Him, but he was not confused about the person Jesus. Peter might have misunderstood His methods and mission, but he was certain that Jesus was Messiah. He may have been in the dark about where he was going, but he knew that in Jesus there was light. He*

may have been scared nearly to death by the demands of discipleship, but he knew that in Jesus there was life. Just before this confession of his dependency on and the sufficiency of Jesus, he had sunk in the storm of intimidating waves and been rescued by the hand of a Master who knew his weakness and the shallowness of his faith (Matthew 14:22- 31).

There is much that we are intimidated by in our walk: doctrines that run counter to our cultures and egos, tasks that seem nearly insurmountable, the weakness of our wills and the seeming severity of God's. We can get lost in the endless debates over the mechanics of Christianity and sink in the despondency of our powerlessness to grasp the mystery of grace, but in the midst of that, we must do what the writer to the Hebrews advised and what Peter did, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." It is He who calls us and He who enables. His body is our bread; His blood our drink. He has the words of life.

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Poet Concerned

kidbrothers.net/release/sepoct96art.html

Reed Arvin

> ***Over the last decade, Reed Arvin has been privileged (his own admission) to be both friend and producer to Rich Mullins. He was there when the first tentative chords and vocals were laid down on vinyl (it was ten years ago, remember), and in 1996, he's still the man at the helm for Mullin's latest, Songs, an aptly titled retrospective of some of Christian music's most popular songs as penned and performed by everyone's favorite ragamuffin.***
>
> ***Arvin has also sat in the producer's chair for artists 4Him and Bruce Carroll and has been composer of some snappy little ditties for television commercials. His talent even extends into the written word, as evidenced in his popular first novel, The Wind in the Wheat, the story of a Christian artist's climb to and a struggle with stardom. His novel's hero, who many surmise was based on Mr. Mullins himself, is in reality, the embodiment of Reed's experiences working within the Christian music industry. As for Rich, his story is probably most easily found in the songs he writes, as Reed Arvin has discovered each and every time he's worked by his side.***
>
> *There's a Bible story that reminds me of Rich Mullins. Maybe you remember it: early in the book of Acts, Peter and his buddies are preaching within earshot of the Sadducees. Peter, not known for his tact, is stepping on toes, both social and political. He's calling spades spades, and the spades don't like it. In fact, they want it stopped. So the Sadducees call Peter and his pals into a big meeting, and give them a funny kind of order: "Look," they say, "you can believe whatever you want, but would you just shut up about it?"*
>
> *This, my friends, is a sentence often uttered to Rich Mullins. Not by Sadducees, or course - by record company reps and even by producers,*

like me. "Do you have to talk politics in your concerts?" "What, may I ask, do oil companies have to do with the gospel?" "We all know televangelists are mainly crooks, but did you have to name names?" In other words: "Rich, you can believe whatever you want, but would you just shut up about it?"

Shutting up, thank God (and I mean that quite literally) is not what Rich Mullins is very good at. I've always believed his gift is only part music; the other part is pure prophecy, and it's a gift that lies uneasily on its recipient. Prophets aren't necessarily the best party guests. But if Rich Mullins were better adjusted and better behaved, a lot of art would not exist in this world, and a lot of truth would still be unspoken. A lot of the songs that you and I have been ministered to by would still be thin air. Of course, with all those toes getting stepped on, it also must be said a lot of hurt feelings would never have needed repairing. Maybe even a few enemies would have remained unmade. But prophets occupy the space between the risk and the payoff and that's where Rich Mullins lives.

To tell or not to tell? What would you do? Suppose you had this crazy gift, this prophetic vision that compelled you go be the one to point the finger, to tell the tales. Would you want it? Or would you shirk it, preferring to be liked by all rather than sincerely admired by a few?

At least in Rich Mullins' case, he gets to tell his tales with a song, and that dulls the blade even while it sharpens the truth. There's comfort in the poetry - a place to hide in the beauty of language. After all, he's pointing the knife at himself most of the time, anyway. If we get cut, its from shrapnel, not blades, Rich Mullins of the exploding songs.....

Songs are where Rich's greatest gift resides, even though he is a powerful communicator in other ways. It's in the songs that whatever message God has chosen to flow through Rich greets the world. And after eight albums, it was high time to put together a compilation - a collection of work that represents the best of some very fine, highly explosive writing.

But putting together a collection meant making tough decisions. How could we pick which ones to include with so many options? Only 12 could make the grade, with three new songs added to put punctuation on a long musical sentence. Here's how record companies normally make that choice: they make a list of all the radio hits; they take the ones that charted the highest and they're done thinking about it. But when they made a list of

Rich's singles that charted in the top five, there were 20 of them, so that didn't help. Choices had to be made.

Maybe your list would've been different. But how could you leave any of the ones that are on the project off? Could you do without "Creed?" Could you abandon "Awesome God?" Forget "Sometimes by Step?" Or "Hold Me Jesus?" See what I mean? In the end, all the songs on the disc remained because there was no way to cut them. They mean too much. And you could, perhaps, make another complete disc with different songs that mean as much to you. But CDs only hold so much music.

Recording new songs on a Best of is always a little tricky. After all, you've already put together your finest work, and anything you add to it needs to be at least as good; you hope, of course, that it will be even better. It's a chance and a challenge to show what you've learned. And there's the record company, too - they want more radio hits. But radio singles are usually picked from a disc-full of new material. With only three new songs added on Rich's project, there wasn't much margin for error.

As usual, Rich wanted to do something different. Two of the tracks on Songs aren't really new at all: "Elijah" from his debut album, is a song that many people feel is Rich's finest ever. But when we did it the first time, we were a couple of bums trying to figure out which end of the microphone to plug in. "So let's record it again," Rich said, "but bring it up to date a bit." Agreed. One down, two to go.

"Sing Your Praise to the Lord" was the first song Rich ever had professionally recorded, if you can imagine that. The song of the decade. The song that sky-rocketed Any Grant's career. A cornerstone of Christian music. And that, of course, was why we argued over it. I didn't want to record it. What can you add to a classic? But Rich revealed a secret: there was a long middle section that had never been heard before that Amy's camp had neglected to include Rich wanted it unveiled. So a new, acoustic guitar driven version of possibly the most famous song in contemporary Christian music made the disc. Two down, one left.

"We Are Not As Strong As We Think We Are" is a different kind of song for Rich; it's an unabashed love song. Different, yet the same; the same passion and fragile humanness are there, exposing more, perhaps, than the composer would have wished. If you ever wondered what kind of song Rich Mullins would write you after you broke up with him, this song is the

answer.

And so the tradition continues - what most of us shut up about, Rich speaks. It gets him in a lot of trouble, but it gets him a lot of adulation, too. And caught in that tension he keeps on, taking his place in a treasured line of artists who speak the unspeakable.

So the disc, Songs, is a history of writing and singing and arguing and winning and losing. What does it all mean? The songs will mean something a little different to each one of you. What it meant to me to be on the other side of the glass as Rich told his tales doesn't fit in a sentence or two - not after eight records.

There is space on the liner notes of every album for the producer to write his personal thanks. I didn't say much this time because I didn't know what to say after so long. So I'll say it now: Rich, thank you for sharing too much. You turned your wounds into art, and I'm grateful. You'll find your peace when art has a name. Until then, may you quill never run dry.

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Pretty Good Genes

kidbrothers.net/release/novdec96.html

In Matthew 16:13-19 we have the fullest account of the conception of the church (in the same way that we often look at Acts 2 as being an account of her birth). Mark and Luke give briefer accounts, but I'm not going for brevity right now; I'm looking for significance. And don't worry that John doesn't include this conception in his gospel. He also did not include Elizabeth's conception of John or Mary's conception of Jesus.

I call it a conception because for all that we don't know about conception, we at least believe that at that moment all that we are made of and all that we will grow into, is set or founded. A conception is that moment when something unique, dynamic, and alive is defined. Something old does not change, something that never was before begins - a new possibility becomes real and takes on its own identity.

This is what happens in Peter's confession that "Jesus is Messiah, Son of the Living God" and in Jesus saying that was the defining moment for the Church He was beginning to build.

Jesus asked, "Who do men say that I am?" and at least four answers were given by at least two apostles. Those who answered this question are not named, possibly because the answers - though they might be accurate - were highly unremarkable. They originated in reason, not in revelation, and Peter's answer would knock them flat. Anyway, as soon as He got His answer, Jesus dropped the whole discussion as if to say that the world He made and that would not receive Him would never be allowed to define Him. No brilliantly composed picture, no delicately balanced compromise about Him would do. He would not refigure Himself to fit their miscalculated equations of disfigure Himself to fit their undersized frames. The ideas that the world had (and still has) about Him were of no interest to Him because they were and still are irrelevant to who He was, is, and ever shall be. Maybe He asked because He knew that the answers would provide a bleak and bland backdrop against which the answer to His next question would really pop.

So He asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Here, Peter distinguished

himself answering not by reason but by revelation, "You are Messiah, the Son of the Living God!" To this Jesus answered (and here I'll ask you to endure my somewhat lopsided but maybe not altogether inappropriate paraphrase), "You blessed little Pebble! Your answer didn't come from this lost little world, but it came from back Home. Now you're a rock and on this rock I'm building my house..."

People have long tried to distinguish between Peter and this confession, but (not that we can settle that debate here) who can sever a man from his beliefs without destroying both? What is conviction if it is disembodied? What remains of a man when he is left without his thoughts? Apart from each other, both are nothing. In their union there is something that never was before - something unique, dynamic, and alive. And in this union, the stuff of which the Church is made and the thing that - if she does well - she will grow into, is set. Here at Peter's confession, the truth of heaven connects with human experience and the Church is conceived.

And just as the heavens declare the glory of God, the Church pronounces the name of His Son. And as the skies proclaim the work of His hands, the Church testifies to the work of His Messiah. Red blood and flesh confess Jesus' Lordship, then drop the ball and are baffled by the immensity of that confession. People who are not pointlessly perfect receive an unattainable revelation and then misunderstand and betray the Truth. They foolishly divide and become divisive and yet He makes them one. They stumble and limp and sometimes turn to lesser gods and then are embraced by the One they've abandoned. As Paul says, "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God..." and this confession that Jesus is Messiah still changes pebbles into rock and as long as the Church confesses, she will continue to be what is in her genes to become.

We've got pretty good genes. We'll do well to grow into them.

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